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高橋 葉介

高橋葉介のA5判コミックス

「夜姫さま」
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MONONOKEZOUSHI
YOUSUKE TAKAHASHI

妖怪奇談、
鬼界を破壊、
ワンダーランドの
花も咲く！

高橋葉介のA5判コミックス

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高橋葉介

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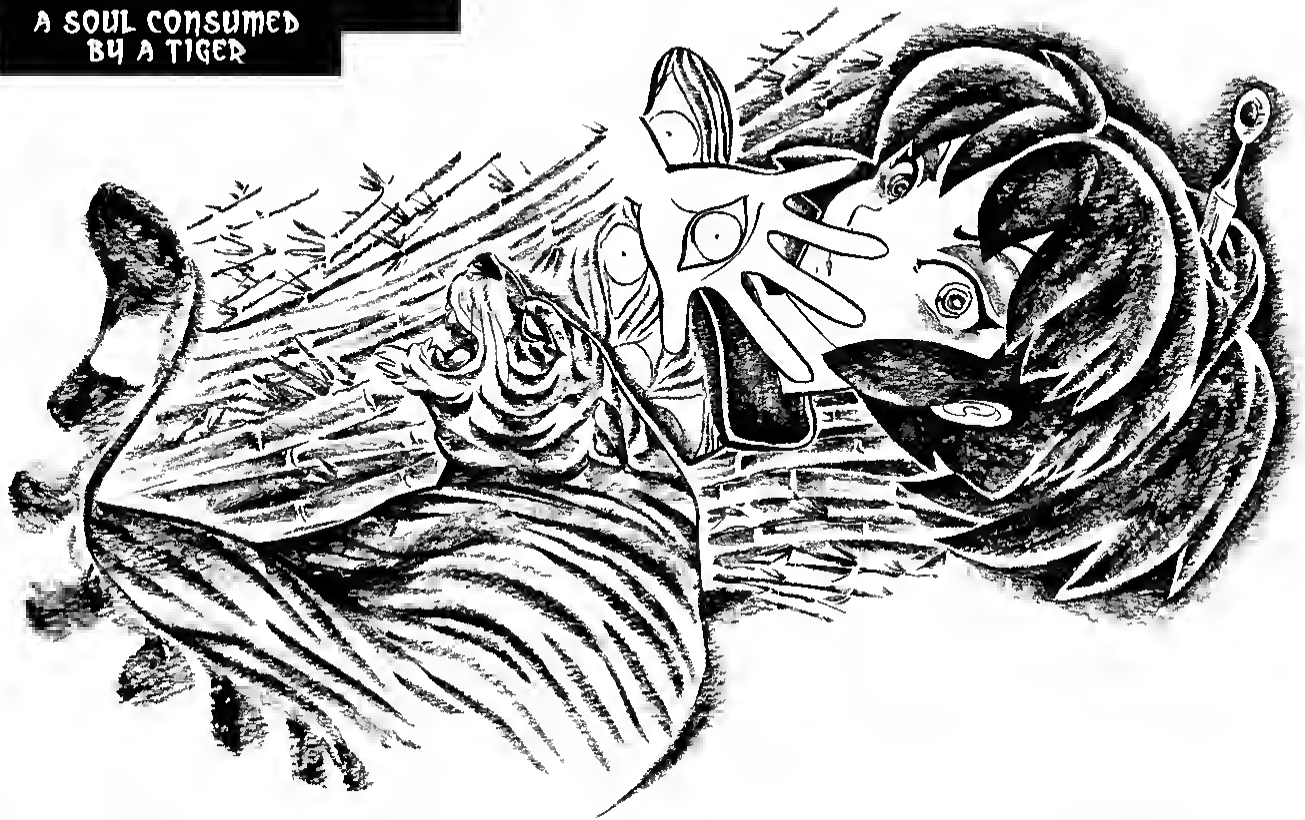
CHAPTER 1:
A SOUL CONSUMED BY A TIGER



I AM THE "EYE OF THE HAND".
A PERFORMER GIFTED WITH CLAIRVOYANCE WHO WANDERS BETWEEN SAKE HOUSES

SURELY, NOTHING SUSPICIOUS WILL COME OUT OF THIS BAMBOO GROVE.
TODAY I WAS CALLED TO AN INN TO PERFORM, BUT...
IF I DON'T HURRY, I'LL BE LATE TO THE RECEPTION.
OH? WAS THAT YOUR VOICE I HEARD? WHO ARE YOU?

IS THAT SO? YOU'RE A PERFORMER, MISSY?
DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT A SUSPICIOUS PERSON.
HEHE, YOU SURE ARE A CONFIDENT GIRL. BUT LATELY THESE PARTS HAVE BEEN DANGEROUS.
GET REAL
WHERE IS IT THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ANNOUNCE "I'M A SUSPICIOUS PERSON?"
IF YOU'D LIKE, I COULD SERVE AS YOUR COMPANION ALONG THE ROAD.

*Okuriookami is a word that specifically refers to men who pretend to be nice and walk girls home but are really just trying to be invited upstairs. However, the animal imagery is important, so I kept it in the English.

SURE YOU WON'T CHANGE INTO A WOLF WHO JUST WANTS A BITE OF ME?*
THAT'S WHAT YOU SAY.
A TIGER?!
AROUND HERE, LATELY IT'S BEEN A TIGER.
HEHE, A WOLF? NOT AT ALL.
ONE THAT PREYS ON PEOPLE.
YES, A HUGE MONSTROUS TIGER.

THIS MAY BE A RUNDOWN DISTRICT, BUT IT'S ON THE EDGE OF THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL
THERE'S NO REASON FOR A TIGER TO BE HERE.
BAR
BANDOW
YEAH RIGHT.
THIS ISN'T THE DEEP MOUNTAIN CRAGS OF CHINA
I WONDER HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY BECOME THE TIGER'S MEAL.
BUT THERE IS ONE, SO IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
AH!

TO HAVE YOUR INNARDS EATEN BY A BEAST WHILE STILL ALIVE...
...IS NOT A VERY PLEASANT PROSPECT.
A DANGEROUS BAMBOO GROVE LIKE THIS..
QUICKLY. LET'S CUT THROUGH HERE.

HMM.
I DON'T TRUST YOU IN THE SLIGHTEST.
WHAT'S THIS?
YOU STILL DON'T HAVE ANY TRUST IN ME?
JUST NOW, YOU'VE ONLY BEEN TURNING US AROUND IN CIRCLES, AM I RIGHT?
WE'VE BOTH KNOWN ALL ALONG.
THEIR SOUL BECOMES A KOCHOU, A SLAVE TO THE TIGER.
IN CHINA, IT SEEMS THEY SAY IF SOMEONE IS EATEN BY A TIGER,
YOU KNOW, MISTER

THAT YOU ARE COVERED WITH BLOOD AND WOUNDS.
YOUR GUTS HAVE BEEN GOUGED OUT. YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A CORPSE.
THE "EYE OF THE HAND" TATTOO IS NOT FOR SHOW.
IT ALLOWS ME TO SEE THROUGH EVERY-THING!

HEE HEE HEE. THAT'S EXACTLY RIGHT.
..THEY WOULD TAKE MY PLACE AND I COULD DIE IN PEACE!
IF I WERE TO PROVIDE MASTER TIGER WITH NEW SPOILS.
!

FROM BEHIND!

A TIGER?!
IT WAS TRULY A TIGER?!

WELL, THAT WAS QUITE THE REACTION.
I GOT IT BY CUTTING ITS WINDPIPE, BUT...
OH?
WHAT'S THIS?
EH?
THE SHOP MIST-RESS?
AH?
THE "EYE OF THE HAND"?

YOU'RE LATE.
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?
COMING HERE AT A TIME LIKE THIS...
THE RECEP-TION IS RUINED
WHAT?
THIS... ISN'T THIS THE INN'S GARDEN?

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS IT?
THAT THING YOU'VE DRAGGED WITH YOU.
THAT'S. A FOLDING SCREEN, ISN'T IT?
WHY ARE YOU CARRYING SUCH A THING?
THIS?
WELL..
THIS IS A SCREEN WITH A PAINTING OF A TIGER

YOU DON'T PLAN TO SELL THAT THING TO ME, DO YOU?
HMPH. WHERE DID YOU PICK THAT UP FROM?
IT LOOKS AWFULLY DIRTY.
WHO WANTS A RIPPED-UP PAINTING OF A TIGER?

◎ ~END~ ◎

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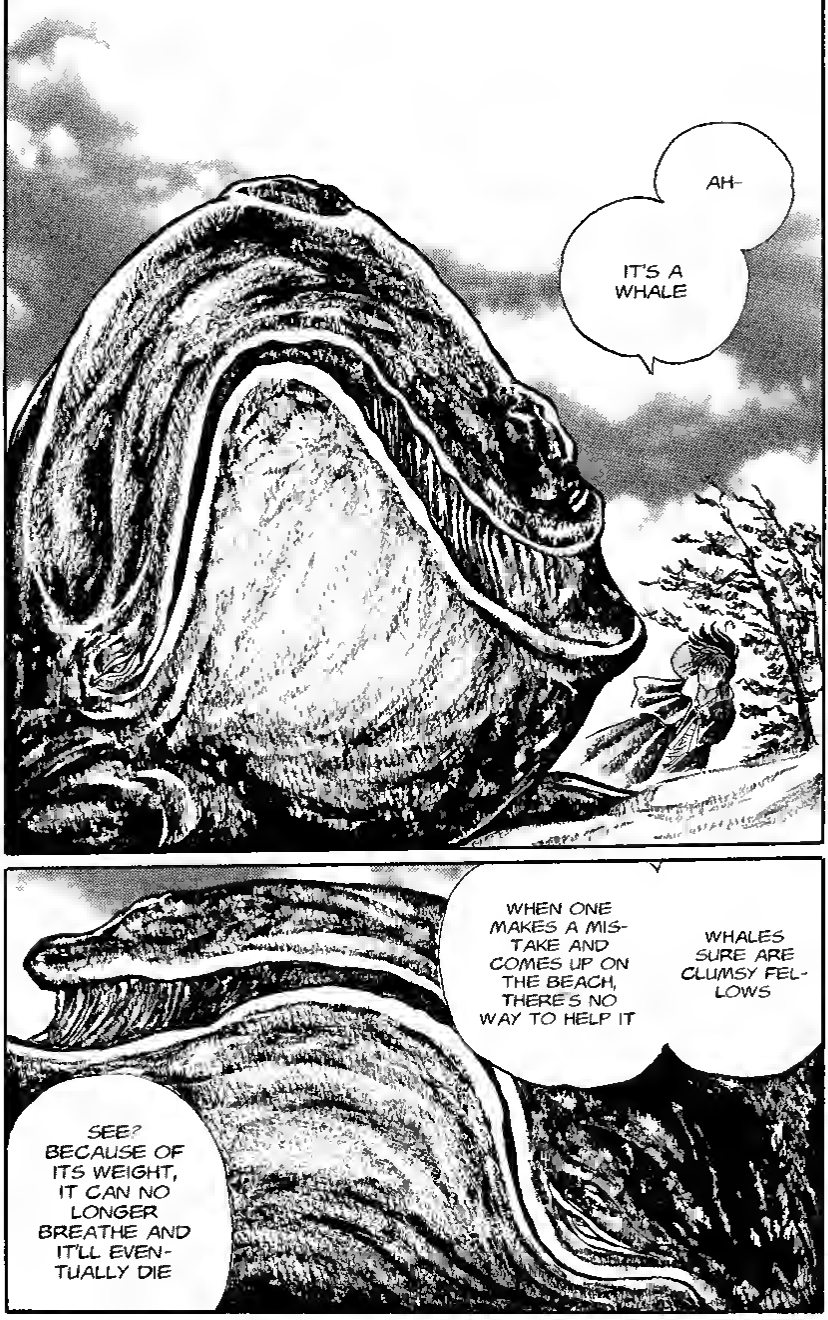
CHAPTER 2:
THE WHALE GOD

I AM THE "EYE OF THE HAND".
A PERFORMER GIFTED WITH CLAIRVOYANCE WHO WANDERS BETWEEN THE SAKE HOUSES OF NOBLE PATRONS.

I HAVE ALSO MADE MANY JOURNEYS.
IT'S THE JOB OF A FLOATING REED WHO HAS NO PARENTS NOR FAMILY
IT'S NOTHING GLAMOR-OUS
BECAUSE I COULD NO LONGER STAY IN ONE PLACE, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO FLEE ELSEWHERE
BEFORE I KNEW IT I HAD BECOME A MIGRATING BIRD
HOWEVER, AS I CONTINUED THIS CYCLE,
ザァァ
ONE TIME, I ARRIVED AT THE BEACH...

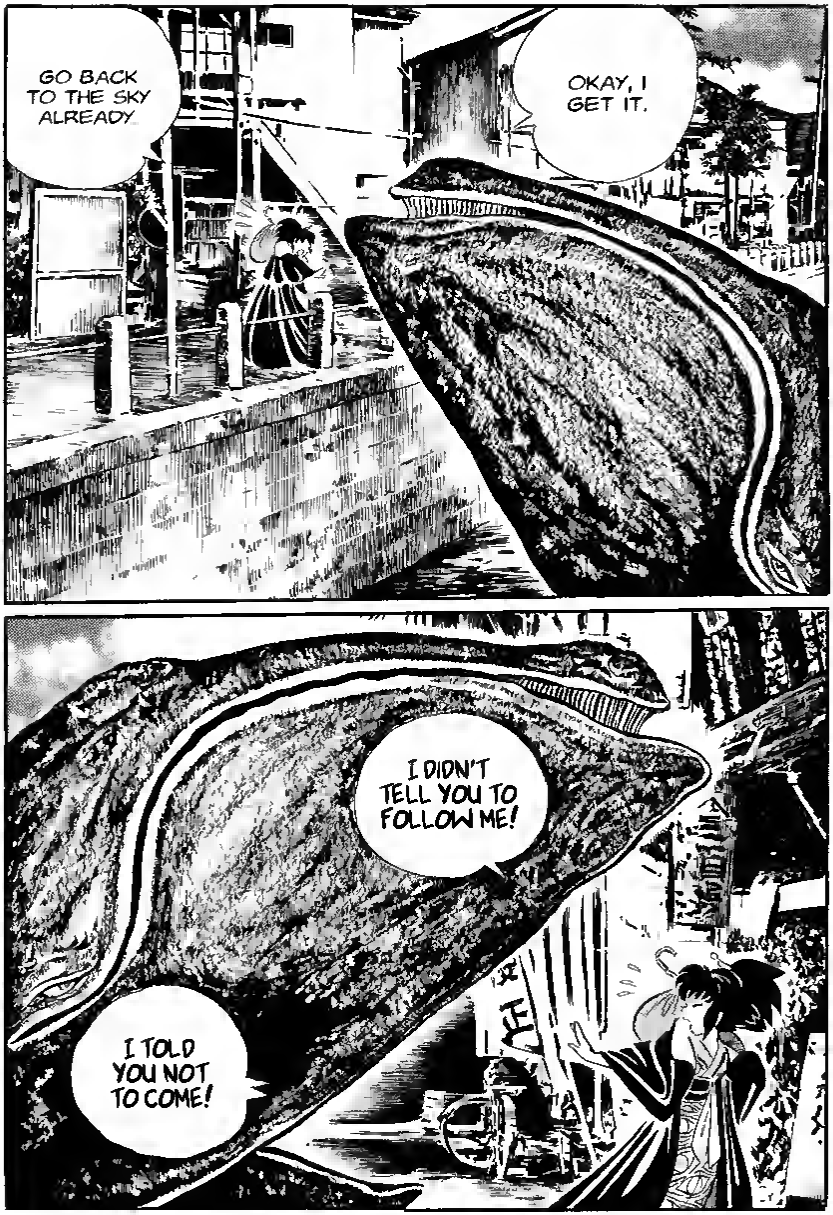

AH-
IT'S A WHALE
WHALES SURE ARE CLUMSY FELLOWS
WHEN ONE MAKES A MISTAKE AND COMES UP ON THE BEACH, THERE'S NO WAY TO HELP IT
SEE? BECAUSE OF ITS WEIGHT, IT CAN NO LONGER BREATHE AND IT'LL EVENTUALLY DIE

YOU'RE AN UNLUCKY FELLOW, AREN'T YOU?
WELL, I CAN'T RETURN YOU TO THE OPEN SEA ALL BY MYSELF
AND IF I CALL THE FISHERMEN, YOU'LL JUST END UP GETTING SOLD AND EATEN.
WHAT? ARE YOU CRYING?
HAVING SUCH A HUGE FRAME IS PITIFUL.
ALL RIGHT. IF YOU'RE ALONE, I'LL BE HERE FOR YOU.

I'LL BE RIGHT HERE, LIKE THIS.
LOOK, THE SKY IS SO BLUE.
IT LOOKS AS IF THERE'S AN OCEAN ABOVE YOUR HEAD

I STAYED WITH THE WHALE UNTIL IT COULD NO LONGER BREATHE AND TOLD IT ALL SORTS OF THINGS
BEFORE ANY OTHER PEOPLE CAME, WE PARTED
AH..

SO IT WAS JUST YOU, HUH?
IT FELT LIKE SOMETHING WAS FLYING TOWARDS ME


GO BACK TO THE SKY ALREADY.
OKAY, I GET IT.
I DIDN'T TELL YOU TO FOLLOW ME!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME!

HEY! CUT IT OUT ALREADY!
BUT STILL, I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SEE HIM FOR DAYS
THE STRANGE CREATURE HAD SOME-HOW BECOME ATTACHED TO ME
WELL, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT
"PHEW, WHAT A RELIEF, HE MIGHT HAVE GONE TO HEAVEN."
YOU SHOULDN'T LAY A HAND ON A STORY-TELLER
NOW, THIS IS NO GOOD, SIR

NOW NOW, I'M USED TO THIS SORT OF THING, YOU KNOW.
A LITTLE WANTONNESS AFTER SAKE HAPPENS ALL THE TIME
IT'S JUST ONE DRUNKARD.
I CAN JUST SMILE AND DEAL WITH HIM.

THUD!

OH DEAR,
WHAT AN UNNECESSARY THING YOU'VE DONE.
grin
DID YOU MEAN TO SAVE ME?
BUT THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, YOU KNOW.

DON'T LAUGH IT OFF LIKE THAT!!
Fade

NOW I'M IN BIG TROUBLE
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS ME AND MY FLATTENED PATRON
HOW'S THIS GOING TO BE CLEARED UP?

◎ ~END~ ◎

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CHAPTER 3:
KAPPA

I AM THE "EYE OF THE HAND."
A PERFORMER BLESSED WITH CLAIRVOYANCE WHO ENTERTAINS SAKE HOUSES

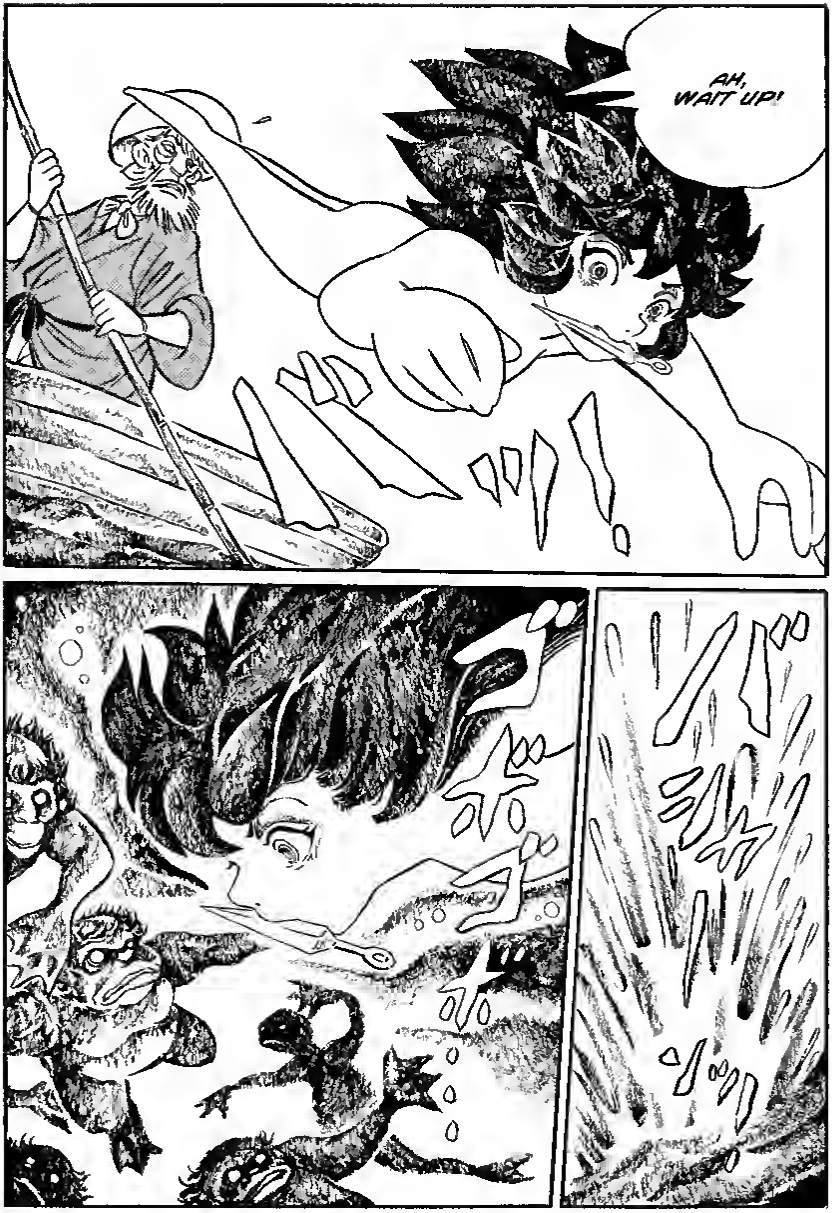
IT'S AN AWKWARD STORY, BUT I MESSED UP A PERFORMANCE
SINCE APOLOGIZING WOULD BE TROUBLESOME, I QUICKLY PRETENDED TO FLEE
AND CAME ALL THE WAY TO THIS RURAL AREA.
PARDON ME, BUT IN THIS RURAL AREA,
IF YOU DON'T GET ON, I'LL ROW THE BOAT AWAY.

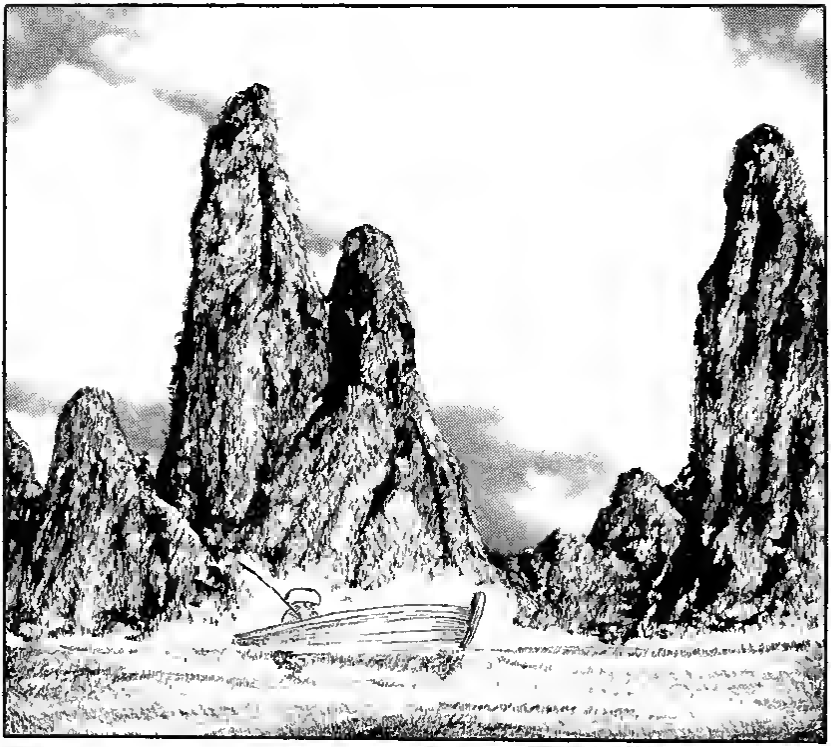
SAY, MISS, IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME IN THESE PARTS?
WHAT DO YOU THINK? THE RIVER'S IMMENSE, ISN'T IT?
I WAS BORN BY THE SEA. THIS ISN'T REALLY SURPRISING.
AND AS FOR RIVERS, NO MATTER HOW WIDE THEY ARE,
THEY STILL LOOK LIKE *URINE* DISCHARGED FROM THE MOUNTAINS

HERE THEY COME, HERE THEY COME
YOU'VE GOT QUITE A MOUTH, MISS RIVERS ARE FRIGHTENING
NOW, LOOK
HUH?!

KAPPA?!
AND THEIR FAVORITE FOOD IS HUMAN LIVER, YOU KNOW
YEP
HEY, WAIT UP YOU CAN'T LAY YOUR HANDS ON HER YET
GYAH!
!
WITH JUST ONE SIGNAL, THEY WILL COME AND ATTACK
THESE CREATURES DO AS I TELL THEM TO
AA-!!

ダエ
HMPH. SO YOU'RE THE KAPPA'S BOSS
IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE---
HOW ABOUT YOU STRIP AND GIVE ME EVERYTHING YOU HAVE?
OH, YOU'RE GOING TO HAND OVER THAT DANGEROUS LOOKING HAIRPIN AS WELL
!


AH, WAIT UP!



I WONDER HOW MUCH I WOULD'VE GOTTEN IF I SOLD THAT BITCH OFF TO A BROTHEL
IT STILL SMELLS A LITTLE LIKE PISS.

TSK, WHAT A WASTE.

!
PISS, YOU SAY? SORRY ABOUT THAT
YEP.
AH, YOU!
YOU DIDN'T GET EATEN BY THE KAPPA?

YOUR FRIENDS SAID THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU
YES.
WE HAVE REMEMBERED.
WE WERE
HUMANS!
HUMANS!
HUMANS!
WE WEREN'T KAPPA TO BEGIN WITH.
WE TALKED TO THIS GIRL AND GOT OUR MEMORIES BACK.

WE DROWNED, AND IN THE END...
WE WERE THROWN INTO THE RIVER BY YOU, THE BOATMAN.
WE WON'T BE TRICKED ANY LONGER!
WE RE-MEMBER IT ALL!
NOW, PREPARE YOUR-SELF.
WE WERE RESUR-RECTED AS KAPPA
AND YOU MADE US WORK LIKE HELL.

THE "EYE OF THE HAND" TATTOO ISN'T JUST FOR SHOW!
BOATMAN, YOUR SIN IS REVEALED!

ガオ
ガオ
ガオ

MORE IMPORTANTLY, I NEED TO FIND A SAKE HOUSE SOON.
OH DEAR.
YET ANOTHER PIOUS DEED THAT BROUGHT ME NO PROFIT
EVEN THE BOWLS ON THEIR HEADS DRIED UP
SO ALL THAT WAS THE KAPPA'S CONDOLENCES AFTER A FIRE.

TLC's note: It's said that when water spills from the lilypad like bowl on a kappa's head, the kappa loses its strength.

◎ END ◎

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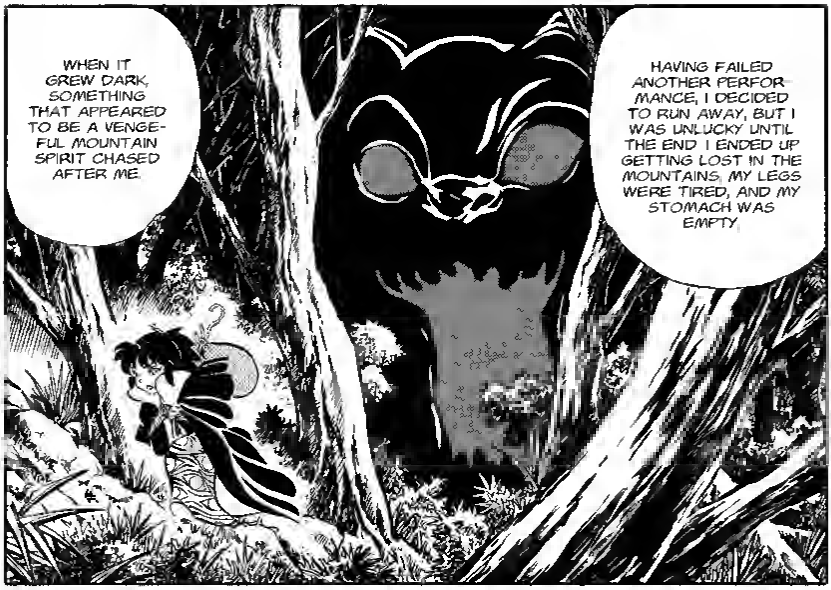
CHAPTER 4: THE "EYE OF THE HAND" PLAYS THE SHAMISEN

I AM THE "EYE OF THE HAND"
A PERFORMER BLESSED WITH CLAIRVOYANCE WHO ENTERTAINS SAKE HOUSES.
RIGHT NOW MY HANDS ARE A LITTLE STUCK..

DO SOMETHING! IF YOU DON'T KEEP PLAYING THAT SHAMISEN, I'LL BE IN DANGER!
EH? WHAT? DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT EVEN IF MY HANDS ARE STUCK, MY MOUTH CAN STILL WORK? THAT'S THE TRUTH, YOU KNOW.


WHEN IT GREW DARK, SOMETHING THAT APPEARED TO BE A VENGEFUL MOUNTAIN SPIRIT CHASED AFTER ME.
HAVING FAILED ANOTHER PERFORMANCE, I DECIDED TO RUN AWAY, BUT I WAS UNLUCKY UNTIL THE END. I ENDED UP GETTING LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS. MY LEGS WERE TIRED, AND MY STOMACH WAS EMPTY.

AT LONG LAST, I CAME UPON A CIVILIZED PLACE
THE SPLENDID MANSION WAS TERRIBLY NEGLECTED, BUT IT WAS BUILT VERY IMPOSINGLY.

EXCUSE ME.
I'M A FEMALE PERFORMER WHO HAS LOST HER WAY
I GUESS THIS IS THE RESIDENCE...
...OF SOME "KING OF THE ROCK" RICH FELLOW

I'M EXHAUSTED AND HAVE LITTLE OTHER CHOICE
IF THEY LET ME STAY, I WOULDN'T MIND EVEN IF THEY BOIL OR BAKE ME

HO HO HO, AN INTEREST-ING GIRL HAS COME MY WAY.
SHE'S COME OUT.
OF COURSE.
I'LL BOIL SOME WATER AND YOU CAN BATHE
WOULD YOU LET ME WASH MYSELF?
BY THE WAY, I'M FILTHY FROM MY TRAVELS. I'M SURE IT DOESN'T SUIT YOUR DIGNITY IF I STAY LIKE THIS.

HYAAAH~
I'M REVIVED~
OF COURSE
I'LL PREPARE A MEAL
BY THE WAY,
MY STOMACH IS CURRENTLY EMPTY.
IF YOU WERE TO STUFF SOME THING IN HERE, IT WOULD SURELY BE WORTH FILLING

EH? THE SHAMISEN?
YES.
TAKE A LOOK INTO THE NEXT ROOM.
AH~ THIS IS GREAT~!
BY THE WAY, MISS
IF YOU'RE A PERFORMER, YOU SHOULD KNOW HOW TO PLAY THE SHAMISEN, RIGHT?
OH.

I WANT YOU TO PLAY THAT SHAMISEN.
IF YOU PLEASE
HAS OBSTINATELY BEEN MAKING ADVANCES ON ME AND FORCING ME TO MARRY.
THE SPIRIT THAT RESIDES WITHIN THIS MOUNTAIN.

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PLAY-ING IT
THAT MAN'S SOUND WAS RATHER POOR, BUT I CAN'T TOUCH THE SHAMISEN
HOWEVER, DON'T DO IT CARE-LESSLY
WHATEVER IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A BALLAD OR A LONG EPIC SONG
YOU CAN JUST COME UP WITH A RANDOM ONE
BE-CAUSE IF YOU HAPPEN TO FAIL,
YOU'LL END UP LIKE THAT TRAVELING MONK
AND HAVE YOUR VITALITY SUCKED AWAY

YOU HAVEN'T GIVEN UP YET?!
URG, YOU OBSTINATE BASTARD!

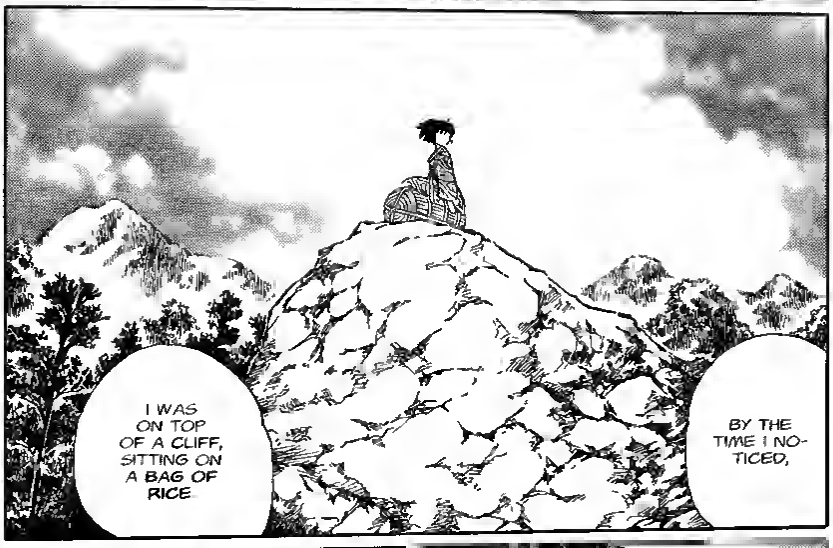
HOW'S THIS? WANT SOME MORE?

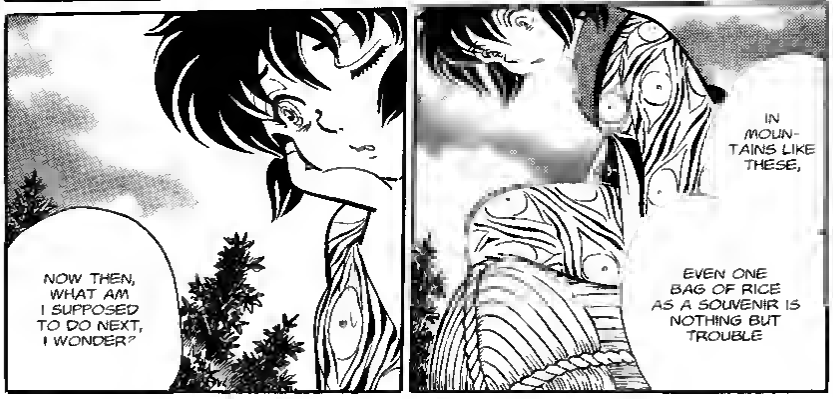
SO THAT MEANS IT'S WEAK AGAINST... THE SOUND OF A CAT SKIN SHAMISEN?
AHH.. IT WAS THE MOUNTAIN CAT MONSTER?
YOU DID VERY WELL I WAS TROUBLED WITH THAT OBSTINATE WOMAN..
HUH? WHAT'S MORE, IT WAS FEMALE...
EH ..EH? EEEEH?

IT IS YOU WHO IS BEFITTING TO BE MY BRIDE
EH?
YOU'RE A MAN?
NOW, WE'LL BE LIVING IN THIS MANSION FOREVER
DON'T DECIDE THAT ON YOUR OWN!
GYAAH!

YOU'RE A FIELD MOUSE?
HUH? A MOUSE?!
SO, THAT'S WHY YOU COULDN'T TOUCH A CAT-SKIN SHAMISEN?
LIKE ANYONE WOULD MAKE SUCH A RUDE GIRL LIKE YOU HIS BRIDE, BITCH!
I'M GIVING YOU A PARTING GIFT, SO YOU BETTER GET OFF THIS MOUNTAIN QUICKLY

HUH?!


I WAS ON TOP OF A CLIFF, SITTING ON A BAG OF RICE
BY THE TIME I NOTICED,


NOW THEN, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NEXT, I WONDER?
IN MOUNTAINS LIKE THESE,
EVEN ONE BAG OF RICE AS A SOUVENIR IS NOTHING BUT TROUBLE

◎ END ◎

Rough Sketch #1

Rough Sketch #2

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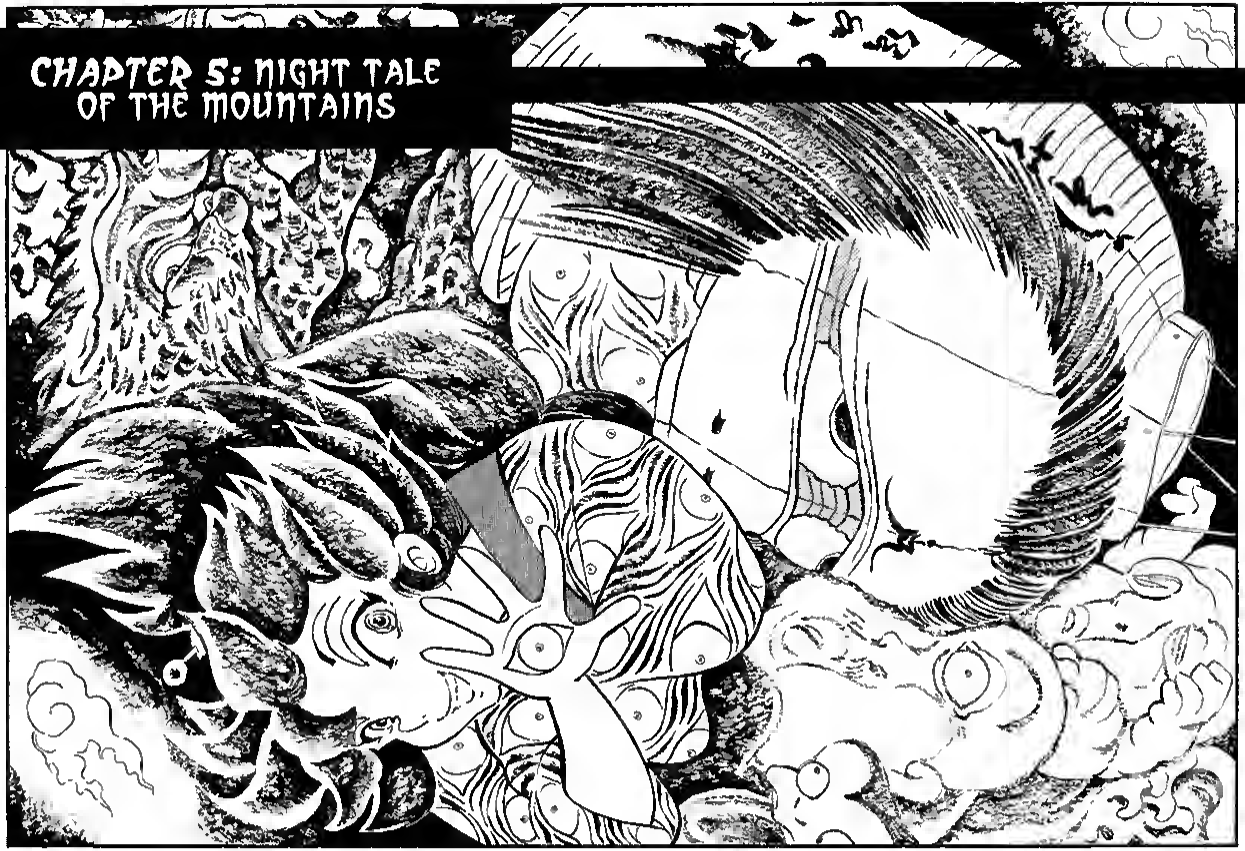
CHAPTER 5: NIGHT TALE OF THE MOUNTAINS



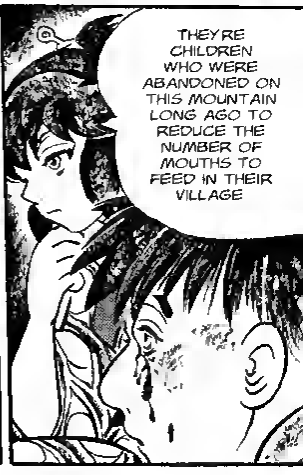
I AM THE "EYE OF THE HAND."
A LOT OF THINGS HAVE HAPPENED AND NOW I'M STUCK IN THE MOUNTAINS, SITTING ON A BAG OF RICE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.
BUT IF I WERE TO TELL THE STORY, IT'D BE RATHER LONG, SO DON'T ASK WHY

YOU LOOK LIKE *YOU* HAVE A STORY TOO YOUNG MASTER.
IT'S OKAY IF YOU DON'T SAY ANYTHING

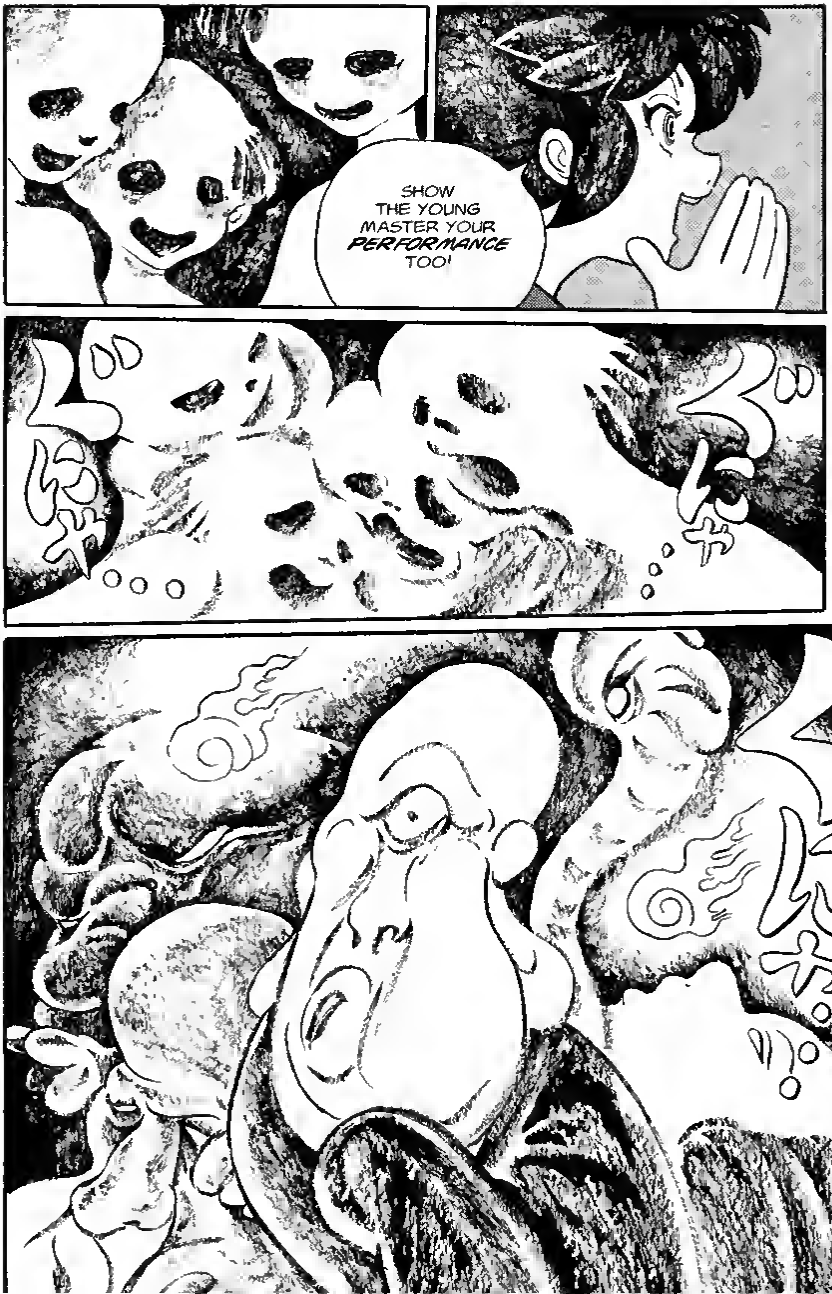
YOU WERE WANDERING AROUND IN THE MOUNTAINS AND NOW YOU MUST BE TIRED
I CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH YOU ANYWAY.
COME SIT BY THE FIRE.
OH...
JUST LIKE THAT
YEP, YEP.
THEY HAVE COME AGAIN...

NO, I SUPPOSE EVEN NOW, IF A VILLAGE IS POOR, THEY WOULD STILL ABANDON CHILDREN AND OLD WOMEN

THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST, BUT IT WAS REALLY ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO.


THEY'RE CHILDREN WHO WERE ABANDONED ON THIS MOUNTAIN LONG AGO TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF MOUTHS TO FEED IN THEIR VILLAGE

TAKE THIS!
THEY DIED STARVING,
SO EVEN IF YOU GIVE THEM UNCOOKED RICE, THEY'LL GLADLY EAT IT.
DON'T BE ALARMED. THEY WON'T DO ANYTHING BAD.
HEY, KIDDOS!
!
I TOLD YOU LAST TIME, DIDN'T I?
SAY THANKS WHEN YOU RECEIVE SOMETHING!

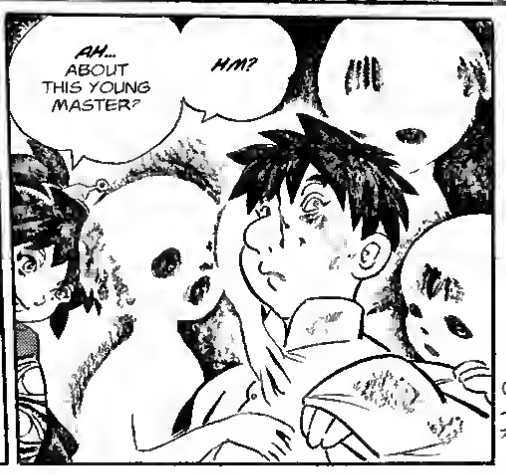

SHOW THE YOUNG MASTER YOUR PERFORMANCE TOO!

AHAHA, THAT'S RIGHT.
VERY GOOD!

WHAT'S WRONG, YOUNG MASTER? THIS IS THE SHOW THAT THESE BRATS WORKED SO HARD FOR. AT LEAST GIVE THEM AN APPLAUSE.
GUYS, IT'S THE OCEAN! NICE JOB DEPICTING SOMETHING YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER SEEN
THE DRAGON WAS NICELY DONE TOO

"LET US DIE BEAUTIFULLY," "YES, MY DEAR"
YOU ELOPED WITH YOUR BELOVED IN A DOUBLE SUICIDE.
HAVING THOUGHT THAT YOU TWO WOULD FULFILL THE MARRIAGE THAT YOUR PARENTS WERE AGAINST IN THE OTHER WORLD,

FAILED IN AN ATTEMPT TO DIE IN A LOVERS' SUICIDE
WELL, THIS YOUNG MAN..


AH... ABOUT THIS YOUNG MASTER?
HM?

OUT OF IDLE CURIOSITY, YOU TWO PRESSED INTO THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS
THEN YOU HAPPILY JUMPED OFF A CLIFF TOGETHER, AND THAT WAS THAT, BUT...
FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE,
ONLY YOU REMAINED ALIVE.

YOUR BELOVED WAS IN A HORRIFYING STATE.
FINALLY COMING TO YOUR SENSE AFTER A CENTURY OF LOVE, YOU RAN.
YOU WANDERED AIMLESSLY THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS-

AND AFTER A LONG STRUGGLE, YOU FINALLY MADE IT TO THIS PERFORMANCE
ALL RIGHT KIDDOS, EXERT YOURSELVES...
...FOR SOMETHING THAT SUITS THIS YOUNG MASTER'S MOOD
HEY GUYS!
HUH?!

WHAT KIND OF SHAPE ARE YOU FORMING?!
DON'T PLAY SICK JOKES!
W...
WAAAAAAA

WAIT UP, YOUNG MASTER!
THAT'S NOT THE REAL THING!
WAH! WAH!
WAAAAH!
WAH!
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF!
IT'S JUST A PRACTICAL JOKE!

AWW..
IT WAS JUST THE ILLUSION OF A WOMAN. THERE WAS NOTHING TO FEAR, YET..
ゆらゆら
ゆらゆら
ゆらゆら

I GUESS HE WAS AFRAID OF WOMEN WHEN HE WAS STILL ALIVE

AH,
AND THE NIGHT IS ALREADY ENDING

◎ END ◎

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CHAPTER 6:
THE "DEMON EYE SEAL"

WELL, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT FISH, SO YOU'RE NOT STEAL-ING IT.
YOU CAN TAKE IT OUT OF YOUR MOUTH ALREADY

YOU REALLY SURPRISED ME EARLIER.

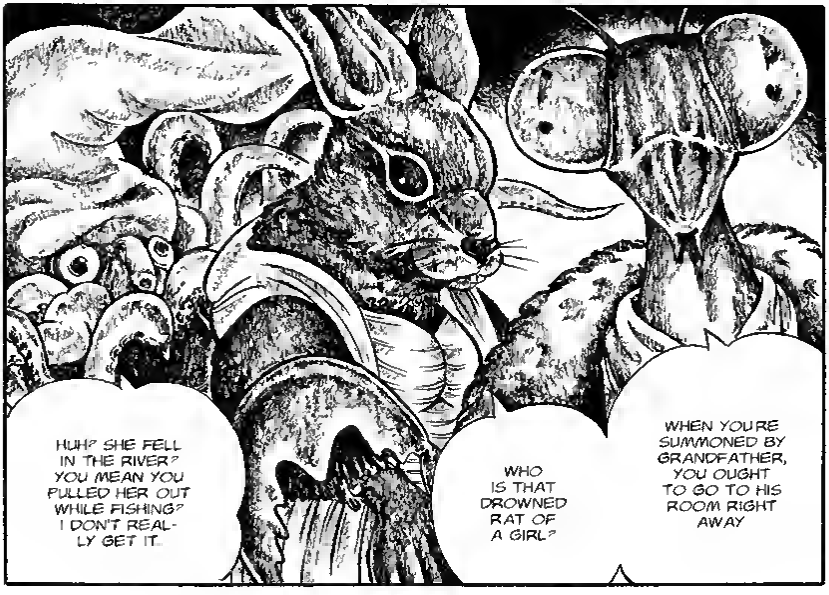
I WAS PULLING MY FISHING ROD UP, AND THEN YOU WERE THERE, BITING THE FISH ON THE END OF MY LINE,
AND I PULLED YOU OUT OF THE RIVER
STRUGGLING WAS TIRESOME SO YOU LET YOURSELF GET WASHED AWAY LIKE THAT, HUH?
YOU'RE PRETTY AMAZING
SO, YOU SAY YOU WERE LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS AND TRIED TO COME DOWN TO THE VILLAGE ALONG THE RIVER,
BUT YOU FELL IN?

THEY'RE LOOKING FOR YOU AT THE MANSION
AHEM. YOU'RE THE SON OF ENSUJI, WHO CAME FROM TOKYO TO ST..Y AT MIKI-SAMA'S PLACE, AREN'T YOU?
SO PLEASE RETURN QUICKLY.

I GOT IT.
THANK YOU

YOU NEED TO DRY YOURSELF AFTER ALL
YOU TOO COME WITH ME

SATOSHI, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
IT'S ALMOST YOUR TURN, YOU KNOW.


HUH? SHE FELL IN THE RIVER? YOU MEAN YOU PULLED HER OUT WHILE FISHING? I DON'T REALLY GET IT.
WHO IS THAT DROWNED RAT OF A GIRL?
WHEN YOU'RE SUMMONED BY GRANDFATHER, YOU OUGHT TO GO TO HIS ROOM RIGHT AWAY

YOU'RE PRETTY.

THANK GOOD-NESS
YOU'RE A REAL GIRL.

YOU'RE SURPRISED BECAUSE I LOOK LIKE A NORMAL GIRL TO YOU, RIGHT, YOUNG MASTER?
IF THAT'S THE TRUTH, WOULD YOU KNOCK ME OVER? I'M ABOUT TO CHARGE YOU FOR SEEING ME, YOU KNOW
OTHER HUMANS LOOK LIKE BEASTS OR INSECTS, RIGHT?
YEAH
DO YOU GET IT?
IF I WERE TO STAY NEAR YOU,
I TOO WOULD GET CAUGHT UP IN THAT AND END UP SEEING STRANGE THINGS

BUT WHEN I CAME HERE FROM TOKYO,
EVERY-ONE'S FACES NO LONGER LOOKED HUMAN.
IT'S WEIRD.
THEY SAY GRAND-FATHER'S CONDITION ISN'T GOOD
WHAT'S WRONG, SATOSHI?
IS THERE SOMETHING STUCK ON MOMMA'S FACE?
MY MOTHER AND FATHER TOO ONLY THEIR VOICES REMAIN UNCHANGED.
NOW, STICK OUT YOUR HAND
しゅっ！
しゅっ！

THIS IS THE "DEMON EYE SEAL."
WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PERSON, HOLD OUT THE PALM OF YOUR HAND
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE THEIR NORMAL FACES.
WHEN YOU DO THIS...
AND BALL UP YOUR HAND, THE THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE WILL BE VISIBLE AGAIN
GOT IT?
YES
THANK YOU.
NO BIG DEAL.
JUST MY THANKS FOR THE SASHIMI

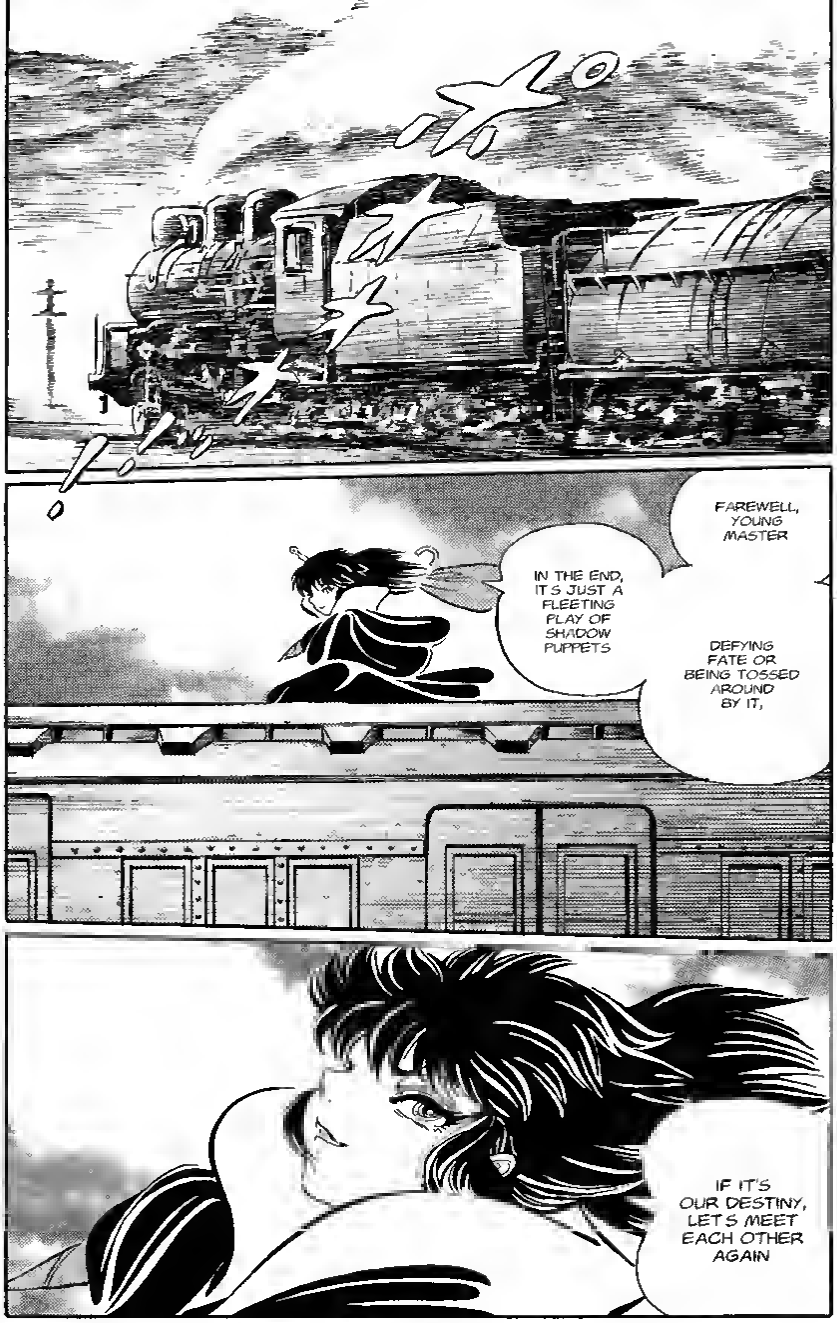
SATOSHI, IT'S YOUR TURN
GO TO GRANDFATHER'S ROOM AND DON'T DIS-PLEASE HIM
YES I GOT IT, MOTHER
SO, HOW WAS IT?
NO USE I WASN'T CHOSEN
HM I WONDER WHO IT WILL BE
ANYHOW WHOEVER IT IS WILL GET THE WHOLE INHERITANCE
HOW ENVIABLE

I'M SATOSHI.
WHO ARE YOU AGAIN...
COME CLOSER...
I CAN'T SPEAK WELL ANYMORE.
LISTEN CAREFULLY.
I'M ABOUT TO DIE, AND I MUST DECIDE AN HEIR.

I CALLED YOU ALL HERE FOR THAT PURPOSE. LISTEN...
FOR A LEGITIMATE SUCCESSOR OF THE MIKI HOUSE... ONCE THAT TIME COMES,
HE'S GRACED WITH THE ABILITY TO SEE A HUMAN'S TRUE NATURE.
IT IS THAT PERSON WHO WILL LEAD THE FAMILY TO PROSPERITY.
"TO ME, YOU LOOK LIKE THE BLESSED AMITABHA"
"YOU LOOK LIKE A GRAND MOUNTAIN, CROWED WITH WHITE CLOUDS"
"YOU LOOK LIKE A PHOENIX, FLYING HIGH IN THE HEAVENS"
HMPH... EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM IS JUST GIVING ME THAT BULLSHIT TO BE CHOSEN AS MY HEIR.
YES
THEREFORE...
I HAVE [illegible] YOU HERE ONE BY ONE AND ASKED THIS:
"WHAT DO YOU SEE ME AS?"

TELL ME HONESTLY. WHAT DO YOU SEE ME AS?
SO TELL ME, SATOSHI...
HUH?!
A-- AHHH !
A M-- MONSTER!!
I SEE. SO YOU CAN SEE ME AS A MONSTER!
MONSTER..?

THE ONE
WHO WILL
BE MY HEIR
IS
YOU---!!


FAREWELL, YOUNG MASTER
IN THE END, IT'S JUST A FLEETING PLAY OF SHADOW PUPPETS
DEFYING FATE OR BEING TOSSED AROUND BY IT,
IF IT'S OUR DESTINY, LET'S MEET EACH OTHER AGAIN

◎ END ◎

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CHAPTER 7:
CITY OF CORPSES

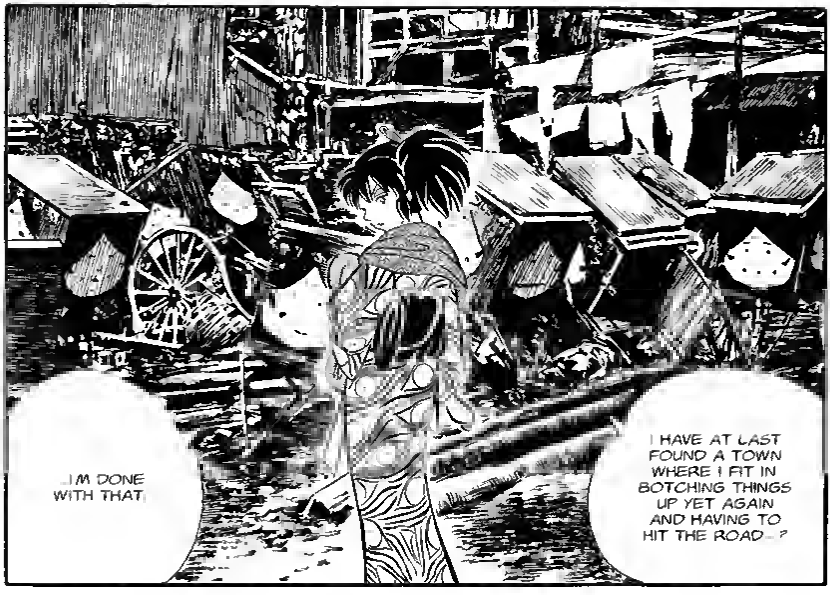
HUH?
CAN YOU HEAR ME?

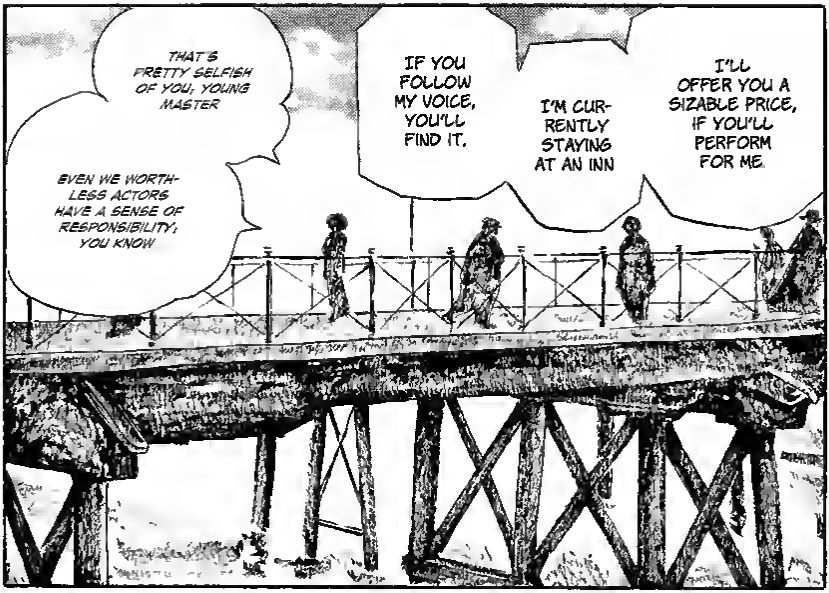
POST
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT?
YOU CAN HEAR ME, RIGHT?

IT'S ME,
SATOSHI

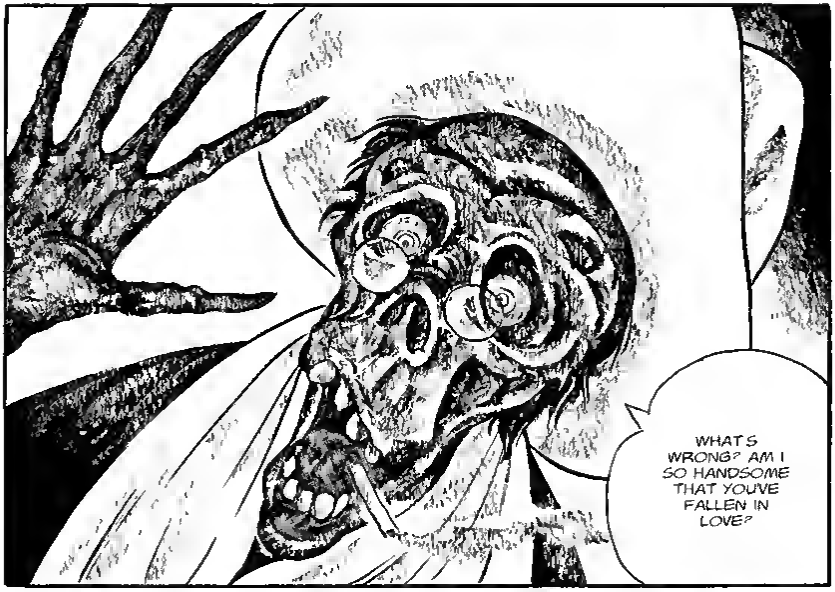
AND NOW I'VE FINALLY FOUND YOU
I WONDER HOW MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED. I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU

DID YOU NEED ME FOR SOMETHING, YOUNG MASTER?
SORRY, BUT I HAVE A PERFOR-MANCE.


I HAVE AT LAST FOUND A TOWN WHERE I FIT IN BOTCHING THINGS UP YET AGAIN AND HAVING TO HIT THE ROAD...?
...I'M DONE WITH THAT.


THAT'S PRETTY SELFISH OF YOU, YOUNG MASTER
EVEN WE WORTHLESS ACTORS HAVE A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, YOU KNOW
IF YOU FOLLOW MY VOICE, YOU'LL FIND IT.
I'M CURRENTLY STAYING AT AN INN
I'LL OFFER YOU A SIZABLE PRICE, IF YOU'LL PERFORM FOR ME.

YO, MISS EYE OF HAND. ARE YOU HERE TO PERFORM?
HUH?


WHAT'S WRONG? AM I SO HANDSOME THAT YOU'VE FALLEN IN LOVE?

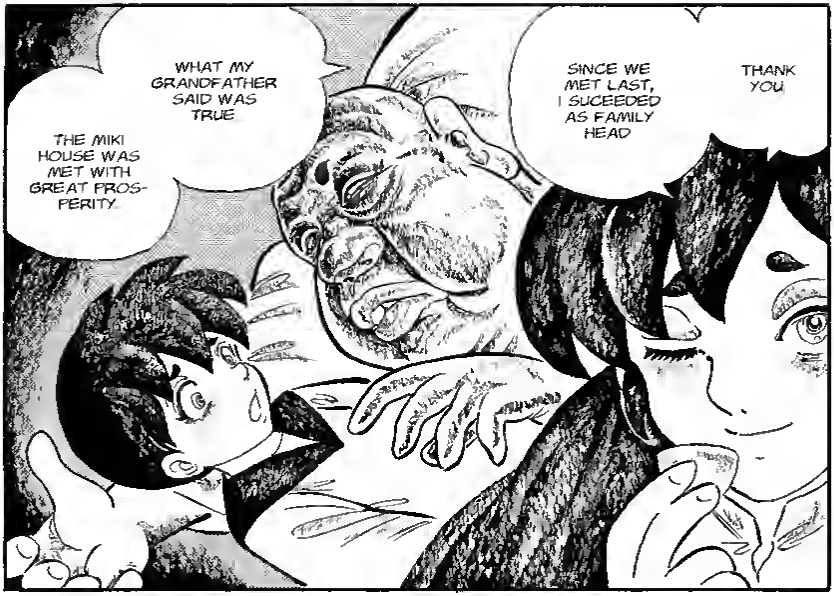
EH?
EH?!

WHY IS...?

WHAT'S GOING ON?
強力毛生剤
毛生薬

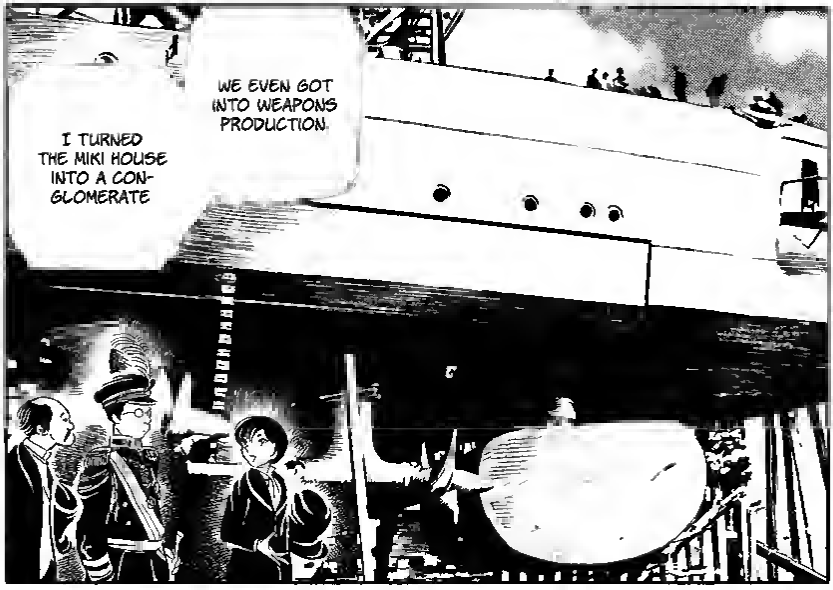
RELAX
THIS IS JUST
PROOF THAT
YOU'RE CLOSE
TO WHERE
I AM
RIGHT NOW,
YOU'RE
SEEING
THE SAME
THINGS THAT
I SEE

ALL RIGHT.
LET'S HEAR YOUR STORY.


THANK YOU
SINCE WE MET LAST, I SUCEEDED AS FAMILY HEAD
WHAT MY GRANDFATHER SAID WAS TRUE
THE MIKI HOUSE WAS MET WITH GREAT PROSPERITY

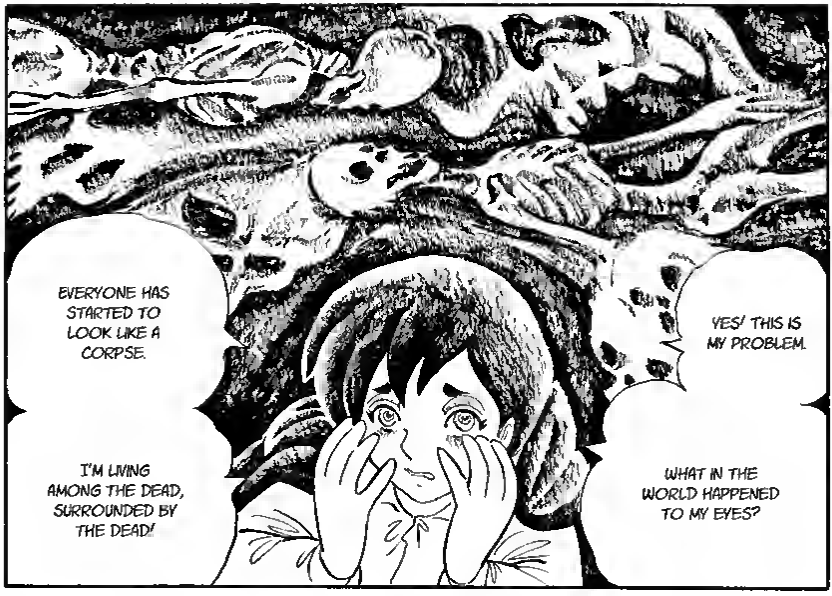
SINCE I COULD SEE PEOPLE'S TRUE NATURES,
NEGOTIATING CONTRACTS WAS A SIMPLE TASK

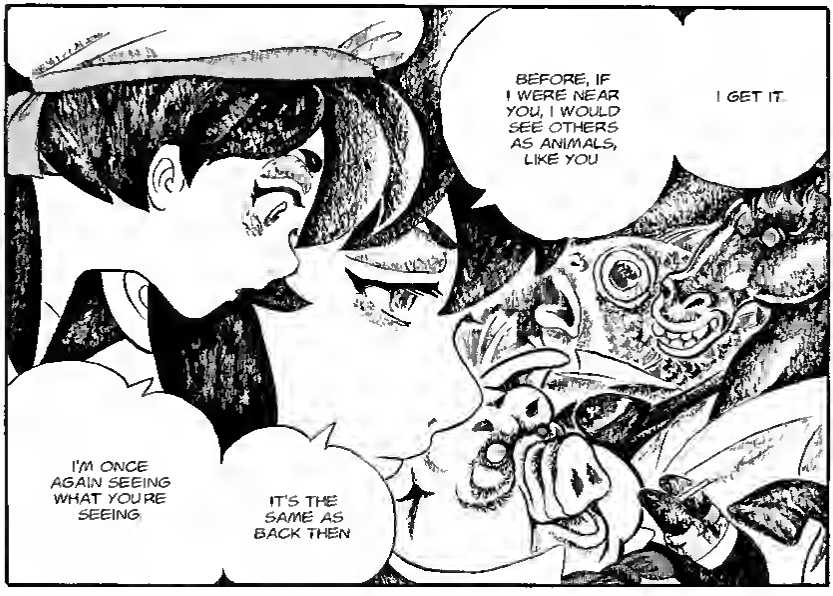
IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT OUR COMPANY WAS GROWING, AND OUR STOCK PRICE KEPT CLIMBING.
COMPETITION WAS POINTLESS. NO ONE COULD EVEN COME NEAR US.
AND SO, THE ENTERPRISE WAS A HUGE SUCCESS AND EXPANDED GREATLY.


WE EVEN GOT INTO WEAPONS PRODUCTION.
I TURNED THE MIKI HOUSE INTO A CONGLOMERATE

THAT'S NICE. AND THEN?
WHAT ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT?

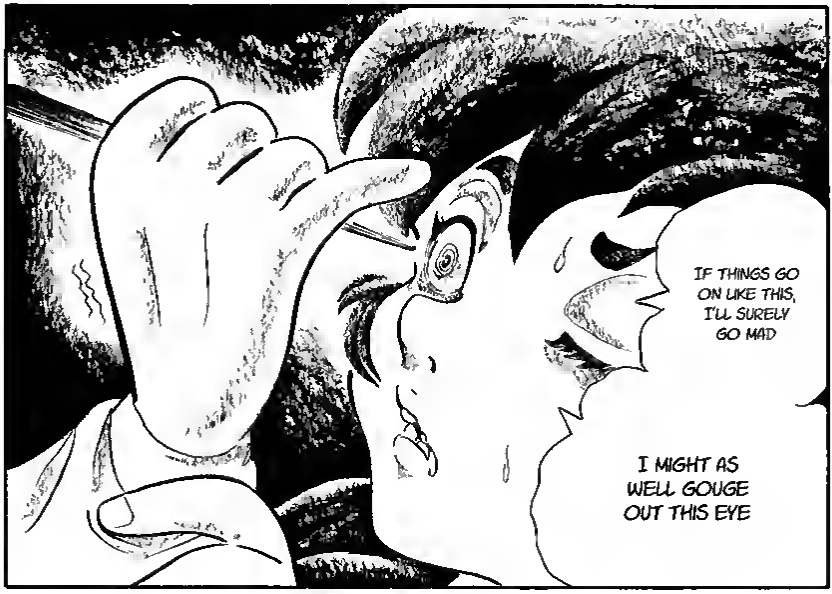
AH, NO... I SEE
THIS IS YOUR PROBLEM.


EVERYONE HAS STARTED TO LOOK LIKE A CORPSE.
I'M LIVING AMONG THE DEAD, SURROUNDED BY THE DEAD!
YES! THIS IS MY PROBLEM.
WHAT IN THE WORLD HAPPENED TO MY EYES?


BEFORE, IF I WERE NEAR YOU, I WOULD SEE OTHERS AS ANIMALS, LIKE YOU
I GET IT.
I'M ONCE AGAIN SEEING WHAT YOU'RE SEEING.
IT'S THE SAME AS BACK THEN

YOUR EYES TRUE POWER IS TO SEE THE FUTURE
HUMANS ARE BEINGS THAT DIE WITHOUT EXCEPTION
THUS, IT WOULD BE NATURAL FOR THEM TO APPEAR AS CORPSES

EVERYONE AROUND ME IS A CORPSE! EVERYONE IS DEAD!!
THE SEAL YOU GAVE ME NO LONGER WORKS.
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE
HELP ME


IF THINGS GO ON LIKE THIS, I'LL SURELY GO MAD
I MIGHT AS WELL GOUGE OUT THIS EYE

DON'T BE A FOOL.
WAIT

JUST LEAVE IT TO ME
IT'S OKAY THERE MUST BE A WAY TO FIX THIS
TOMORROW, I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT SOMEHOW

◎ END ◎

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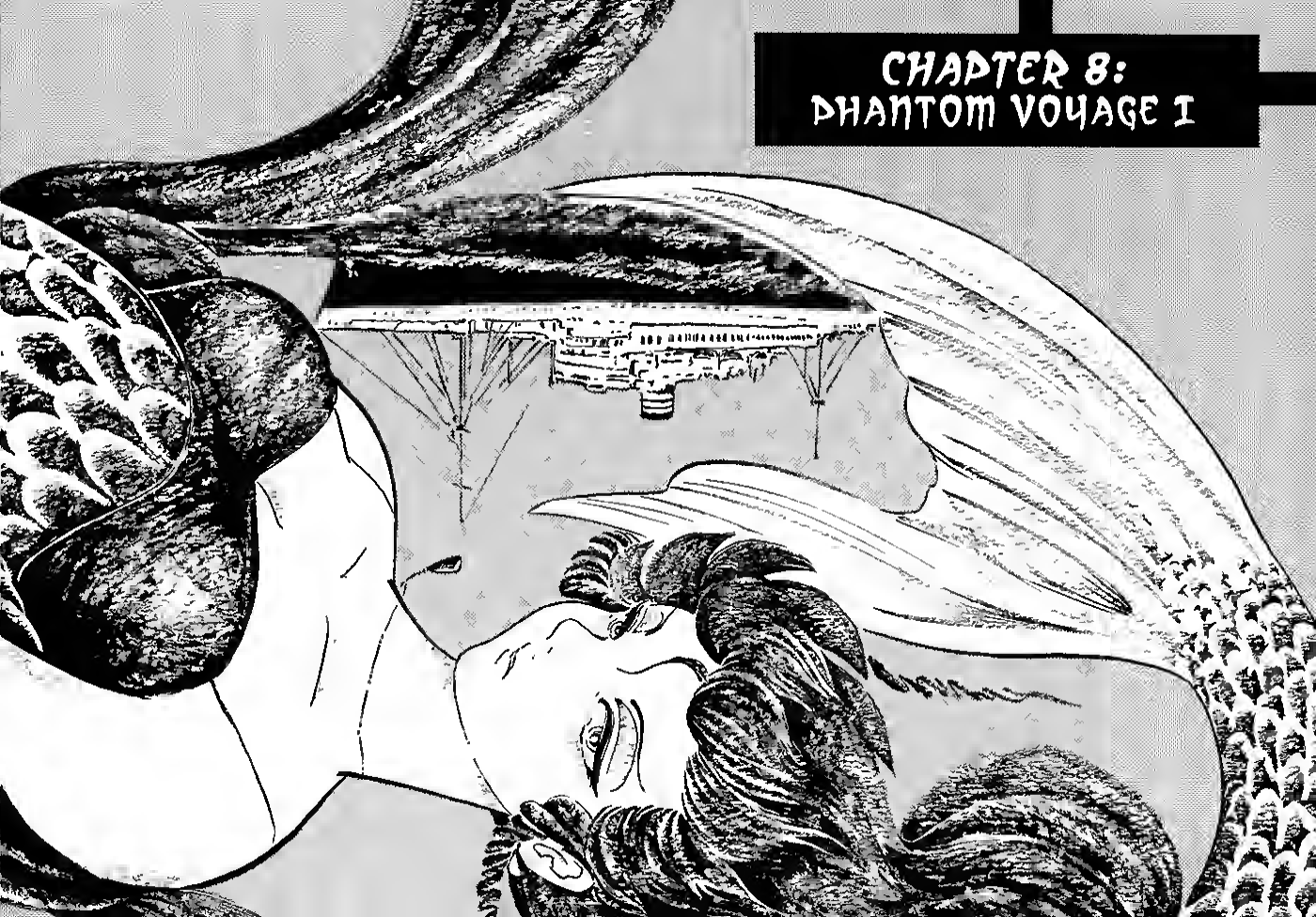
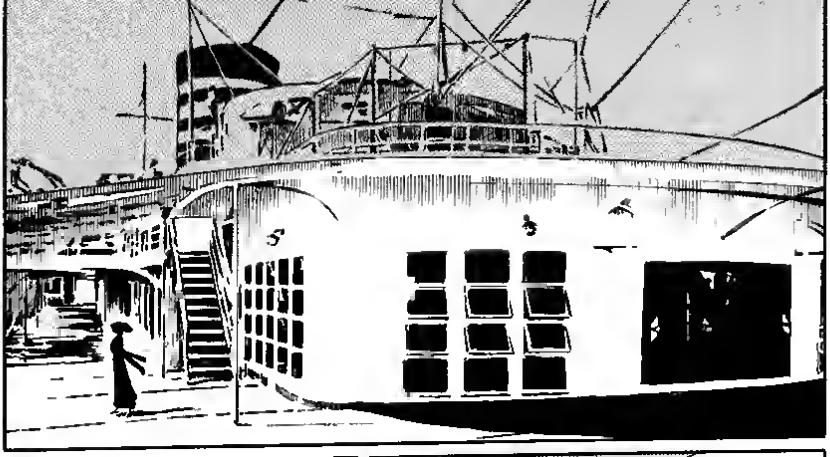
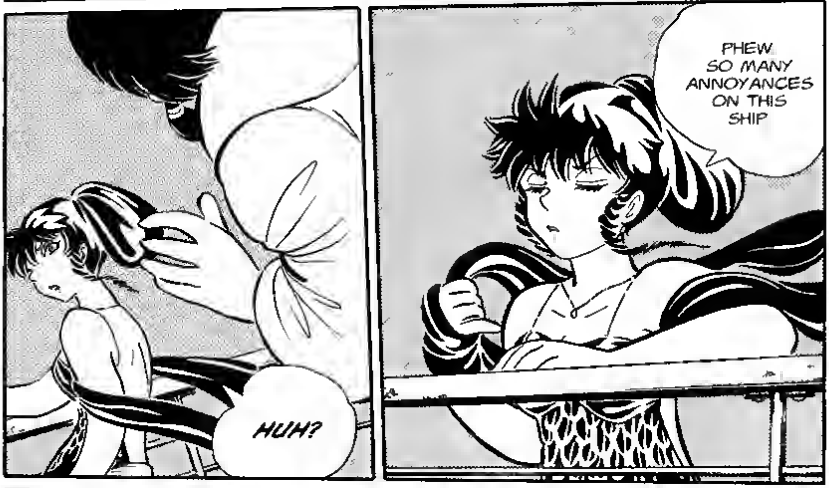

CHAPTER 8:
PHANTOM VOYAGE I

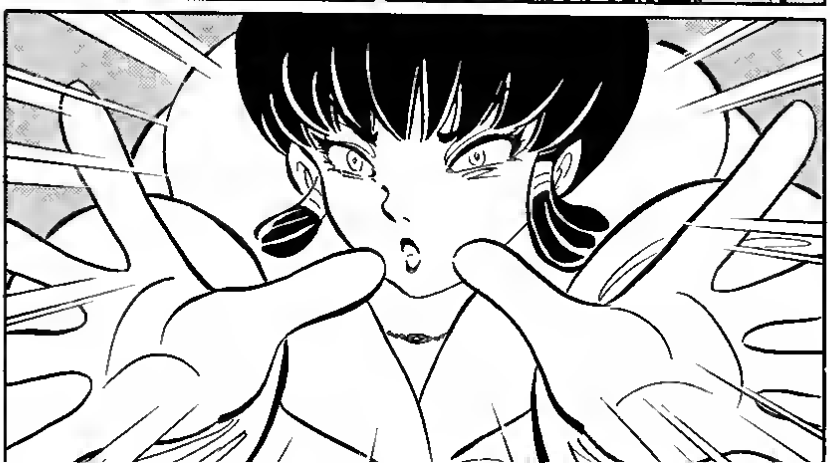
WHO IS THAT BEAUTY I WONDER?
ALL THE TALK SEEMS TO BE ABOUT HER
OH,
SHE'S WITH THE HEAD OF THE MIKI HOUSE...
HIS MISTRESS?
NO, THAT NOUVEAU RICHE GIRL IS STILL SINGLE SHE'S JUST SOME ODDBALL.

LOOK AT THAT, HOW UNSEEMLY
HMPH. EVEN IF SHE HAS A PRETTY FACE, IT'S EVIDENT THAT SHE'S OF LOW BIRTH
I SEE
ANYHOW, IT SEEMS SHE STARTED OUT AS A MERE ACTRESS
NO, NO. IT'S HARDLY A GOOD IDEA TO INTERFERE WITH THE WHIMS OF THE MIKI HOUSE'S YOUNG LEADER
I'M NOT AFRAID OF A GIRL LIKE THAT
OR SO I HEARD
THEN SHE USED HER WILES TO SEDUCE A RICH PATRON

THEY'RE NEVER SEPARATED, NOT EVEN FOR A MOMENT.
THEY ALWAYS STAY CLOSE TOGETHER.
YOUNG MASTER SATOSHI IS ENTRANCED WITH THAT GIRL
WHAT SHOULD WE DO? HE WENT SO FAR AS TO TAKE HER ON THIS SHIP, SO IT MUST BE FOR REAL
HAH! IT'LL BE A GOOD SHOW
AT LEAST WE WON'T BE BORED



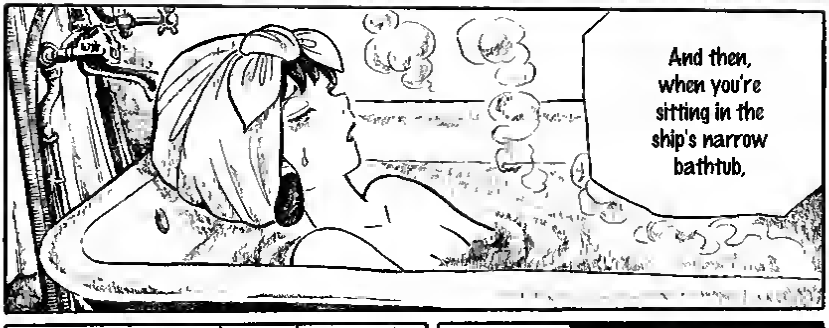

PHEW. SO MANY ANNOYANCES ON THIS SHIP
HUH?



Goodness, a woman's jealousy is a frightening thing.
I don't know who you are or where you're from, but you've fallen in love with the young master, haven't you, miss?

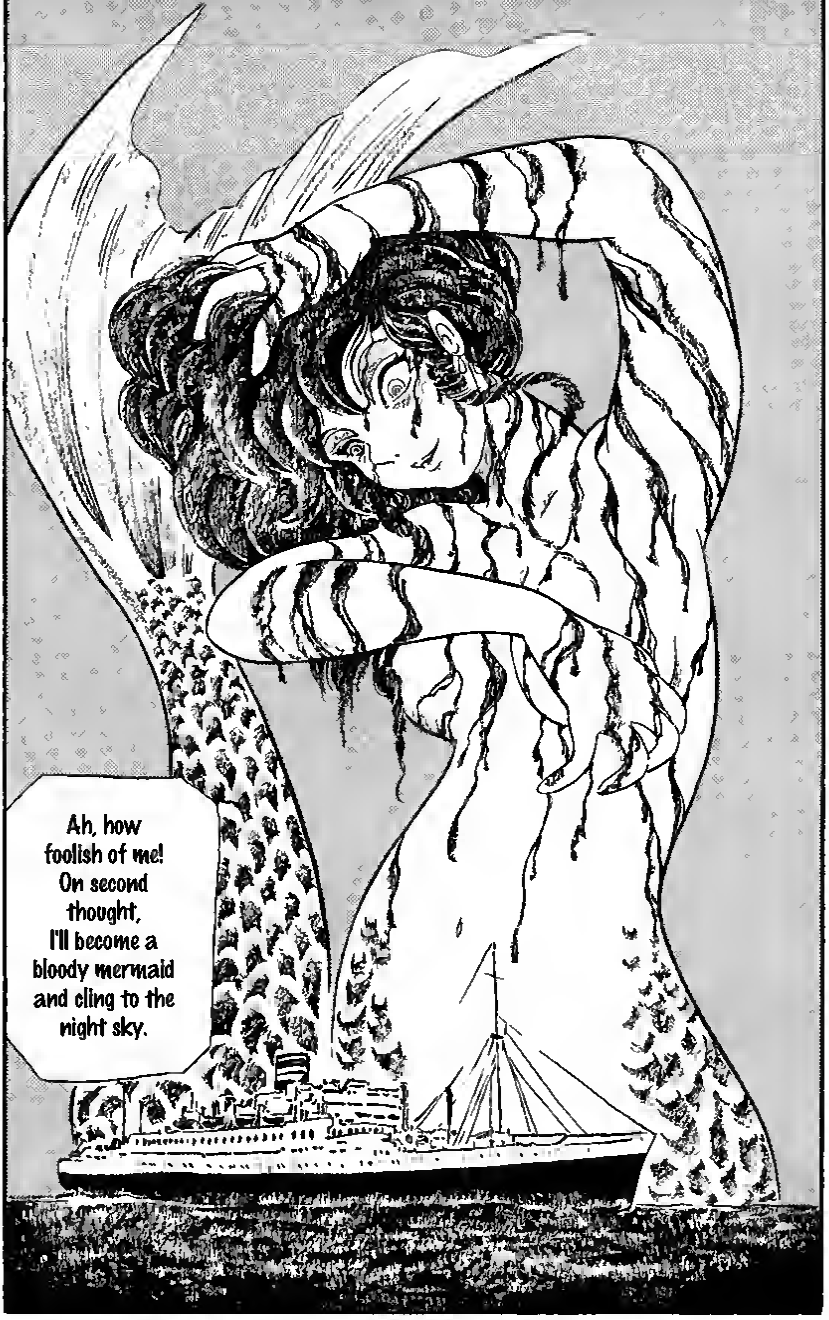
You detest me more than anything.
But still, you shouldn't do something like this.
Why? Listen. Surely I'll be eaten by the fishes.
And when that happens, I'll come back as a ghost.

I'll be smiling at you from the portholes.
I'll float, suspended above your cabin bed,
blood and seawater dripping from my drenched body.


And then, when you're sitting in the ship's narrow bathtub,

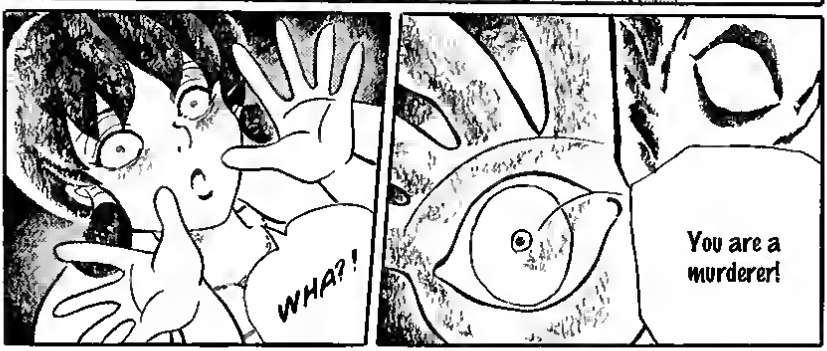
I'll grab you with my scaly hands...
...and drag you under the water.

For of course, the tub is a portal into the depths of my new aquatic domain.


Ah, how foolish of me! On second thought, I'll become a bloody mermaid and cling to the night sky.

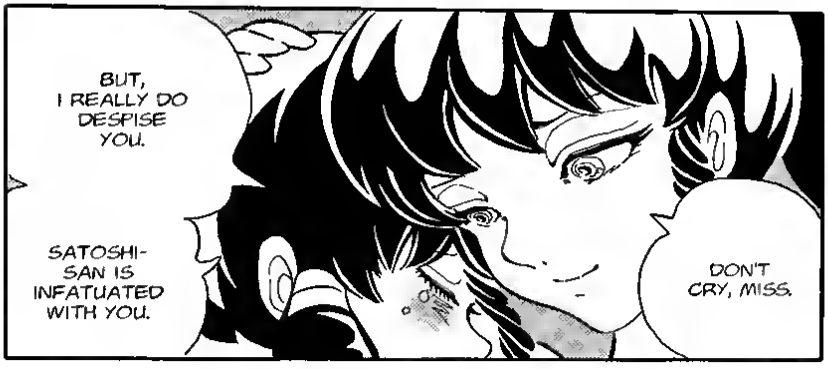
And then, I'll spot the ship you're on and pick you out from the sky.

I'll proclaim your sin in a load voice:
"Behold! There is a murderer here!"


WHA?!
You are a murderer!

I WAS JUST PLAYING A LITTLE TRICK ON YOU.
SORRY.

WAS IT SCARY?


BUT, I REALLY DO DESPISE YOU.
SATOSHI-SAN IS INFATUATED WITH YOU.
DON'T CRY, MISS.

YOU DON'T LIKE SATOSHI-SAN?
WHAT? I DON'T UNDER-STAND.
IT'S JUST THAT IF I'M NOT NEAR THE YOUNG MASTER, HE SEES THINGS HE'D RATHER NOT
THAT'S NOT HOW IT IS
WELL, THAT'S NOT THE CASE EITHER
THAT'S ALL HE NEEDS ME FOR
EVER SINCE I WAS BORN, NO ONE EVER REALLY NEEDED ME
YES THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.
NOW I'M HAPPY JUST TAGGING ALONG

TENOME, WHERE ARE YOU?!
TENOME!
SIR!
WITHOUT YOU, I WILL...
WHAT'S WRONG, SIR?

I SAID DON'T COME NEAR ME, YOU DROWNED CORPSES!!
DON'T COME NEAR ME!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?!
HELL! ALL OF YOU ARE DROWNED CORPSES.
YOU'RE ALL GOING TO DROWN!
WHERE ARE YOU, TENOME?! THIS SHIP IS GOING TO SINK!
THIS SHIP IS GOING TO SINK! EVERYONE IS GOING TO DIE
SHIT! THIS IS TERRIBLE!!

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THE CAUSE OF THE SINKING REMAINS UNKNOWN.
IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THE SHIP STARTED TO FOUNDER AND SLIP INTO THE SEA.
A HUGE VOLUME OF SEAWATER SURGED INTO THE SHIP AND OVERCAME THE PASSENGERS.

THE NUMBER OF LIFEBOATS WAS NOT ONLY INSUFFICIENT, THERE WAS ALSO NO TIME TO BOARD THEM.
THE PIERCING SCREAMS OF THOSE THROWN INTO THE SEA COULD BE HEARD.
STARVING KILLERS ARRIVED FROM THE DEPTHS IN GREAT NUMBERS.

THE SHARKS FILLED THEIR STOMACHS AND CLOUDED THE SEA WITH RED.

BUT I ESCAPED THE FEEDING GROUND AND BROKE THE SURFACE.
WOW! THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE SAFE AS WELL!!
I'M SO GLAD
I WAS RESCUED BY SATOSHI-SAN, WHOSE SAFETY MADE ME SO HAPPY.
SATOSHI-SAN LIFTED ME ONTO THE BOAT HE WAS RIDING.

I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO LOSE YOU
LET'S GO BACK TO JAPAN NOW
AND LET'S GET MARRIED.
YES!
I'M SO HAPPY, SATOSHI.

AND SO, I RETURNED TO TOKYO AND MARRIED SATOSHI.

A GREAT CROWD OF PEOPLE CAME TO GIVE US THEIR BLESSINGS.

SATOSHI AND I LIVE IN A MANSION ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOKYO. IT'S LIKE OUR VERY OWN CASTLE.
WE HAVE MANY SERVANTS, INCLUDING A CHAUFFEUR TO DRIVE THE CAR,
MY LIFE IS LIKE THAT OF A PRINCESS.
A BUTLER, AND MAIDS. I DON'T HAVE TO DO ANY KIND OF HOUSEWORK.

SATOSHI IS VERY KIND. HE SEES TO MY EVERY DESIRE.
FROM
ARY"
EVERY NIGHT WE PARTY AND GO TO THE THEATRE.
WE ARE THE COUPLE OTHERS ENVY.

I DONATE FOOD TO STARVING CHILDREN.
OH, AND I MUSTN'T FORGET MY CHARITABLE DEEDS.
IT'S JUST LIKE A DREAM!
I AM ADMIRED BY ALL AND BASK IN THEIR PRAISE.
...A DREAM?

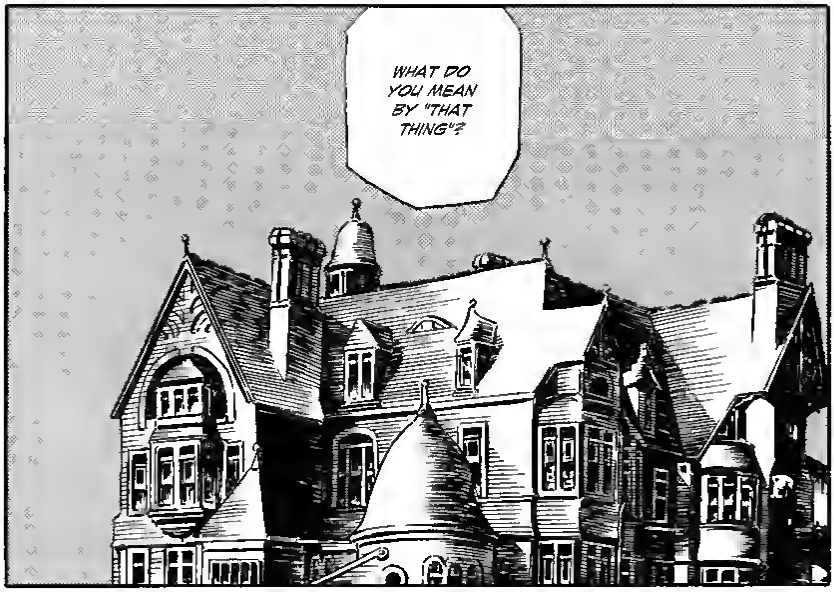
JUST A
DREAM?

THIS PLACE ... IT'S JUST LIKE THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN.

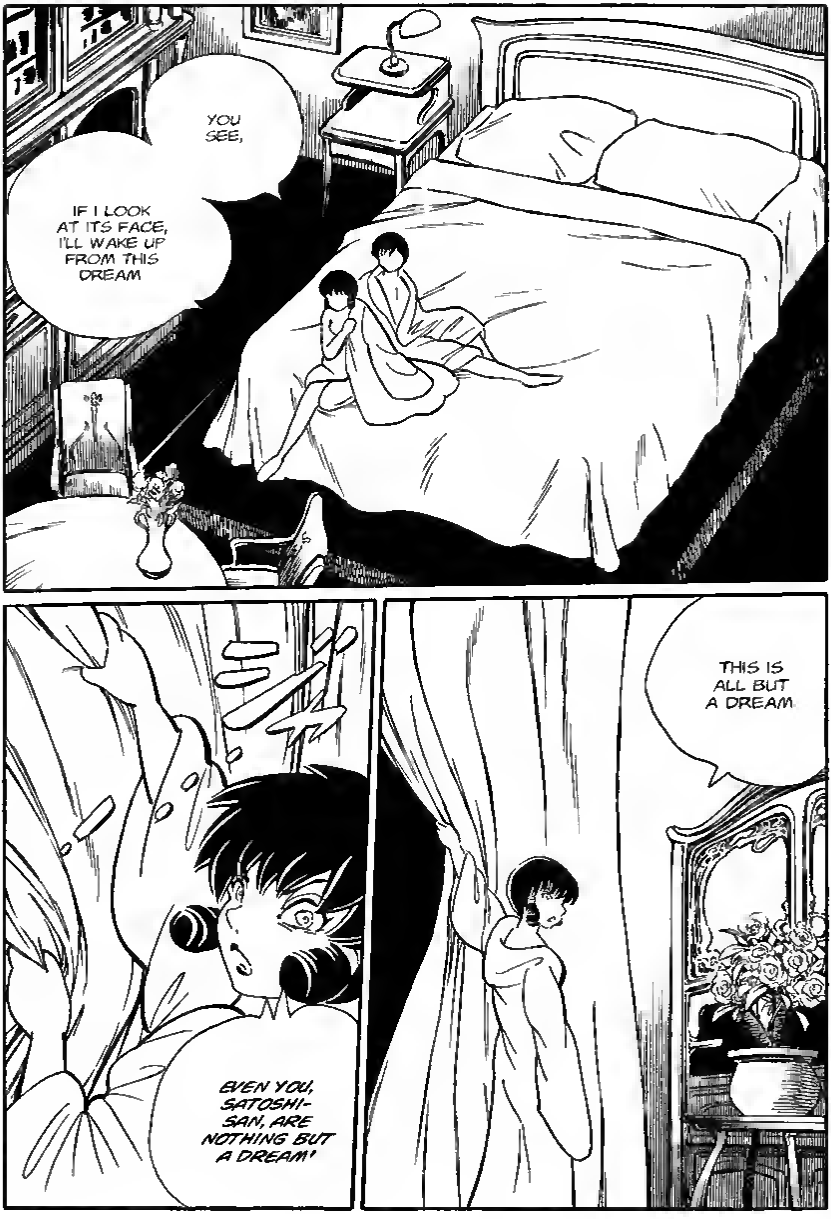
AAH, JUST NOW,
SOMETHING HUGE PASSED OVER MY HEAD--

BUT I MUSTN'T LOOK AT *THAT*.

IF I LOOK AT THAT THING'S FACE...


WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "THAT THING"?

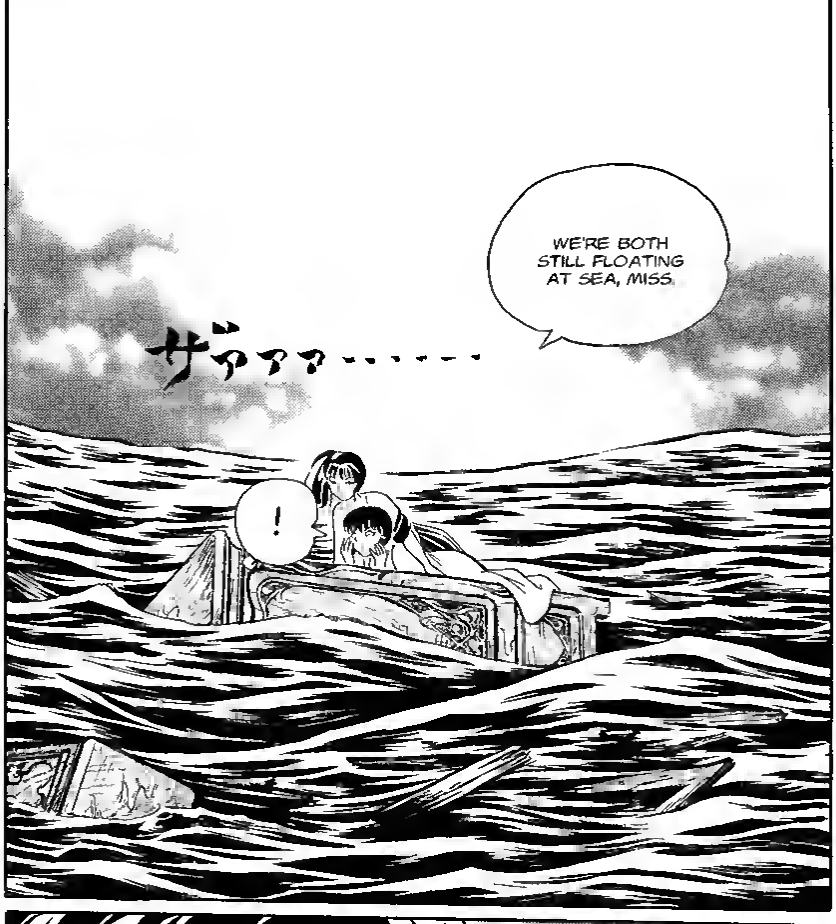
WHY MUSTN'T YOU LOOK AT ITS FACE, I WONDER?
WELL, YOU SEE--

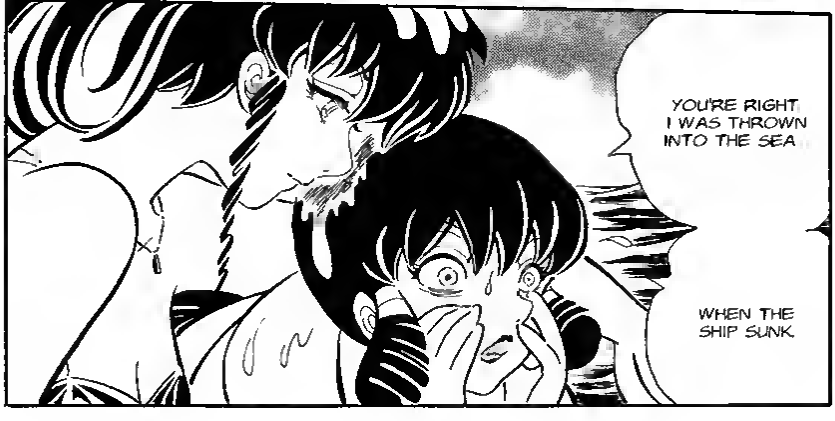

YOU SEE,
IF I LOOK AT ITS FACE, I'LL WAKE UP FROM THIS DREAM
EVEN YOU, SATOSHI-SAN, ARE NOTHING BUT A DREAM!
THIS IS ALL BUT A DREAM

ISN'T THAT RIGHT?!
THIS IS A DREAM, ISN'T IT?

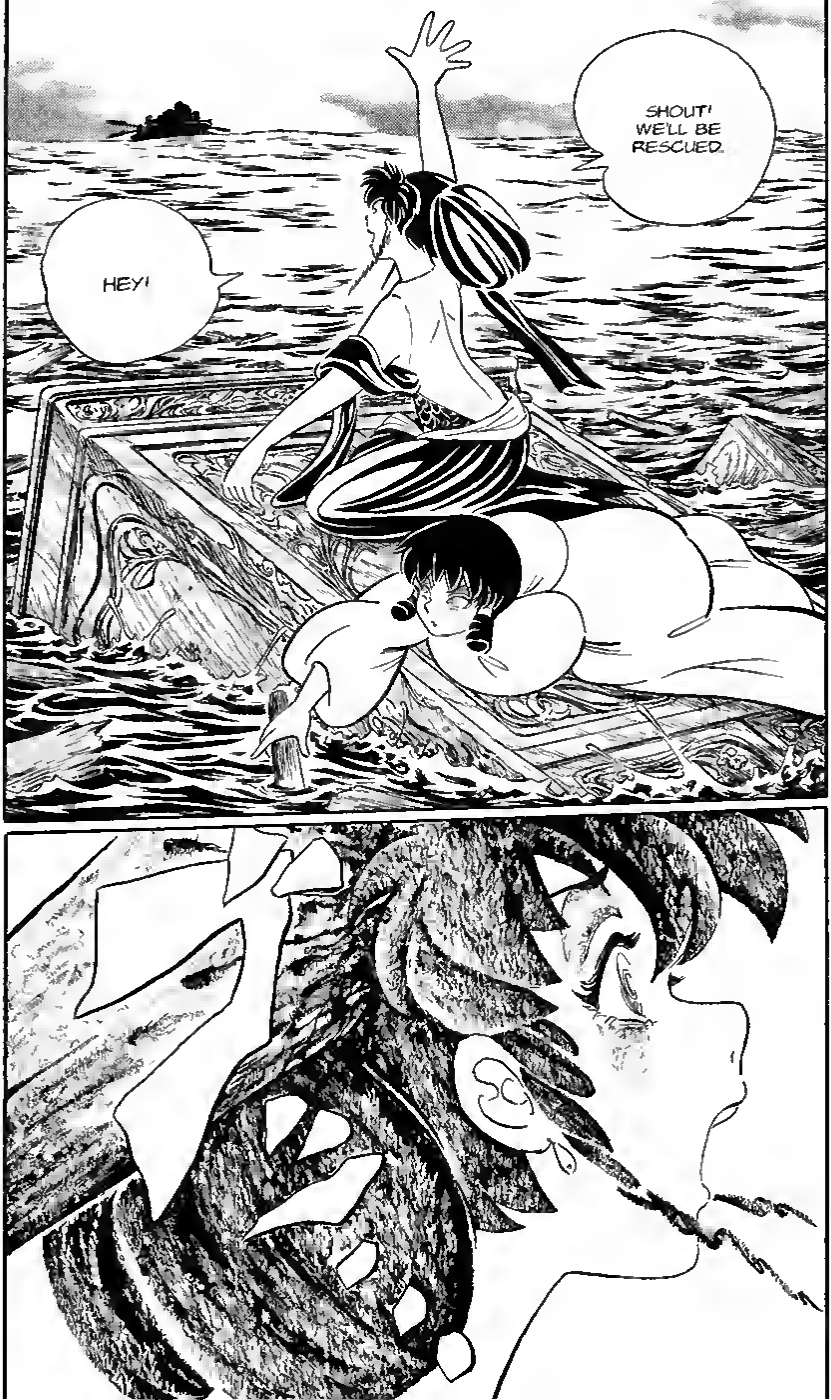
EVERYTHING IS BUT A DREAM YOU'RE SHOWING ME!!

AH, SO YOU'VE FINALLY NOTICED? IT COULDN'T BE HELPED, COULD IT?
THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S EXACTLY AS YOU SAY.


WE'RE BOTH STILL FLOATING AT SEA, MISS.
ザァァ……
!


YOU'RE RIGHT. I WAS THROWN INTO THE SEA
WHEN THE SHIP SUNK.

DO YOU REMEMBER BEING PULLED ONTO THIS FLOATING WARDROBE WHILE SCREAMING?
SINCE YOU WERE SO NOISY, I HAD YOU SLEEP FOR A BIT.
DID YOU HAVE A GOOD DREAM?
YES, SUCH A NICE DREAM
WHAT ABOUT SATOSHI-SAN? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
DON'T WORRY HE'S SAFE TOO.
REALLY? HOW DO YOU KNOW?
I SAW HIM BEING PULLED ONTO A LIFEBOAT. I'M SURE HE'S ALL RIGHT.
I SEE. THANK GOODNESS
OH, LOOK. A BOAT'S COMING.


SHOUT! WE'LL BE RESCUED.
HEY!

HUH?!
IF ONLY YOU WERE GONE!
IF ONLY YOU--
HE'D FALL IN LOVE WITH ME!!
SATOSHI-SAN WOULD SURELY LOOK AT ME!

HEY! HEY!
THIS WAY! HELP!
WHA--
ゴボゴボ…

NOW, COME ALONG WITH US
SORRY TO MAKE YOU WAIT, MISSY.
TO THE VERY BOTTOM OF HELL.
TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

YOU'RE THE SAME AS US
THE SAME AS US.
YOU STILL HAVEN'T NOTICED?
YOU DROWNED AND DIED LONG AGO, MISSY.
COME ALONG WITH US.
NOW, LET'S GO
WHA?!

YOUVE COME TO YOUR SENSES?
YOU'RE INSIDE A RESCUE BOAT
YOU WERE PULLED OUT OF THE SEA, SO YOU CAN RELAX NOW

YOUR BELOVED SATOSHI IS HERE, MISS
SEE, SATOSHI-SAN IS BY YOUR SIDE TOO.
HM?
SO YOU'RE SAFE TOO.
I'M GLAD
THAT'S WHY I'M GLAD...
I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU
...I WAS ABLE TO SEE YOU ONE MORE TIME

IS SHE DEAD?
YES, SHE'S DEAD.
FOR I AM ONLY AN ILLUSION YOU CREATED.
BECAUSE I ALSO DIED LONG AGO
WELL THEN, I'LL DISAPPEAR TOO.
FINE, DO AS YOU WISH.
DISAPPEAR ALREADY.

IT'D BE FINE IF EVERYONE JUST DIS-APPEARED.
GO ON, CEASE TO EXIST BEFORE MY EYES.
ボォォ
I'M ALL RIGHT, YOU KNOW
I'VE BEEN ALONE FROM THE START.
THIS IS NOTHING OUTRAGEOUS TO ME
I'M JUST GOING BACK TO BEING ALONE AGAIN

◎ END ◎

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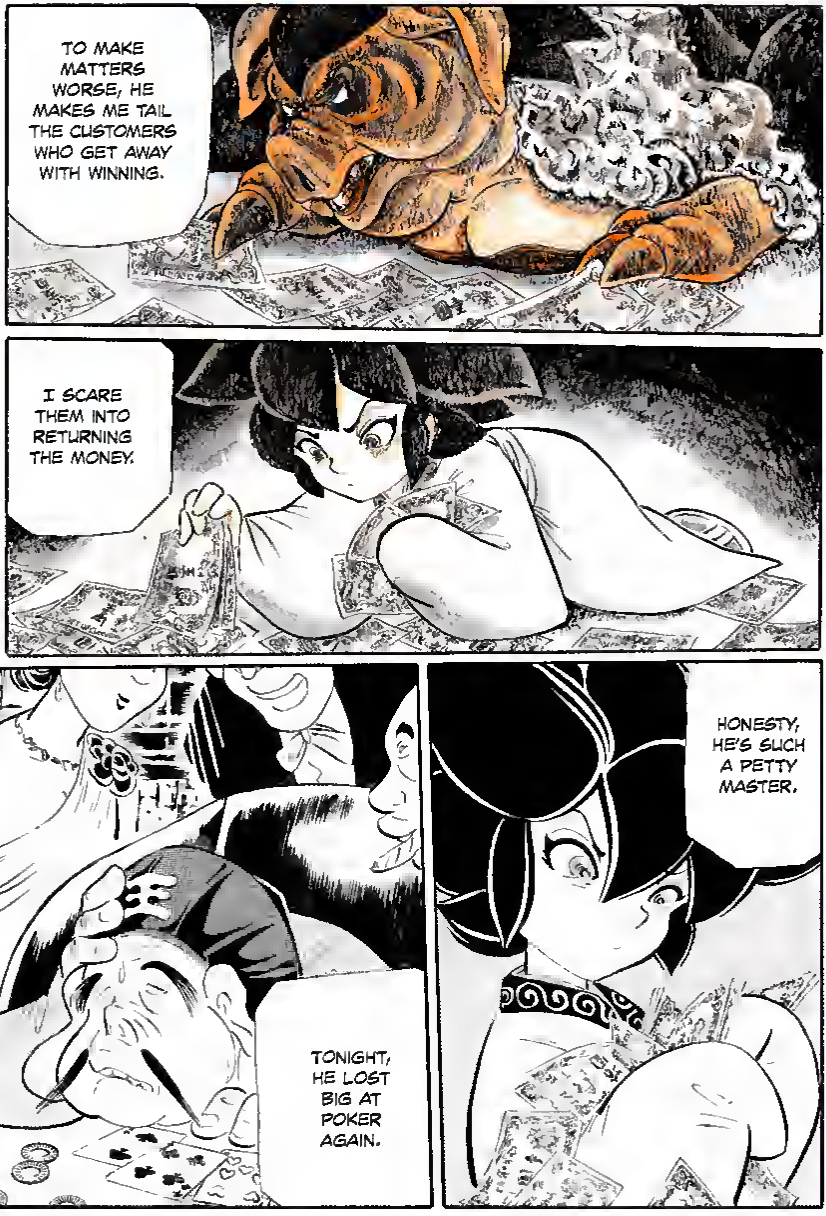
CHAPTER 10:
APPRENTICE SORCERER

MASTER WAN'S LOVE OF GAMBLING HAS BECOME A PROBLEM.
HE'S OBSESSED WITH IT, BUT BECAUSE HE'S SO UNSKILLED, HE DOESN'T KNOW WHEN TO CALL IT QUITS.

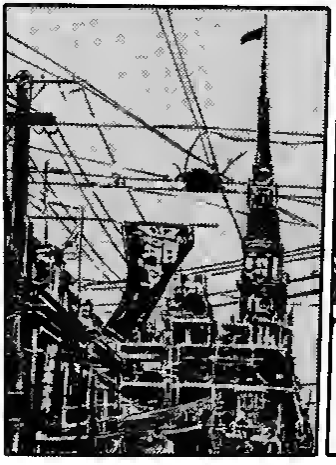
1999
HEY, ARE YOU ALONE?
WHY DON'T YOU SPEND A NIGHT WITH ME?
I'M QUITE LOADED TONIGHT
I WON BIG AT GREAT WAN'S GAMBLING PARLOR, YOU SEE
HUH?
DROP IT

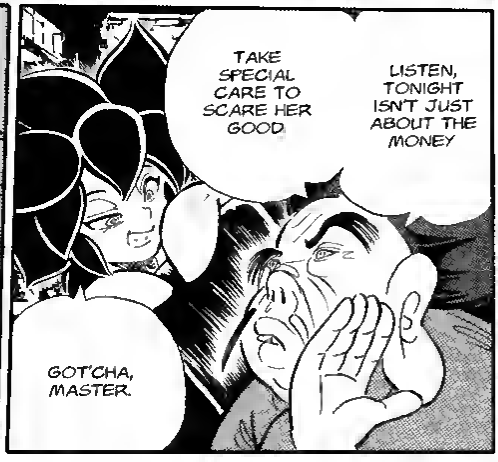
DROP IT!!
IT'S MONEY WON FROM GAMBLING. DROP IT ALL.
SOMEBODY SAVE ME--!
WAAA!!
SAVE ME! SEE, HERE'S THE MONEY! I'M GIVING YOU EVERYTHING, SO TAKE IT!!


TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, HE MAKES ME TAIL THE CUSTOMERS WHO GET AWAY WITH WINNING.
I SCARE THEM INTO RETURNING THE MONEY.
TONIGHT, HE LOST BIG AT POKER AGAIN.
HONESTY, HE'S SUCH A PETTY MASTER.

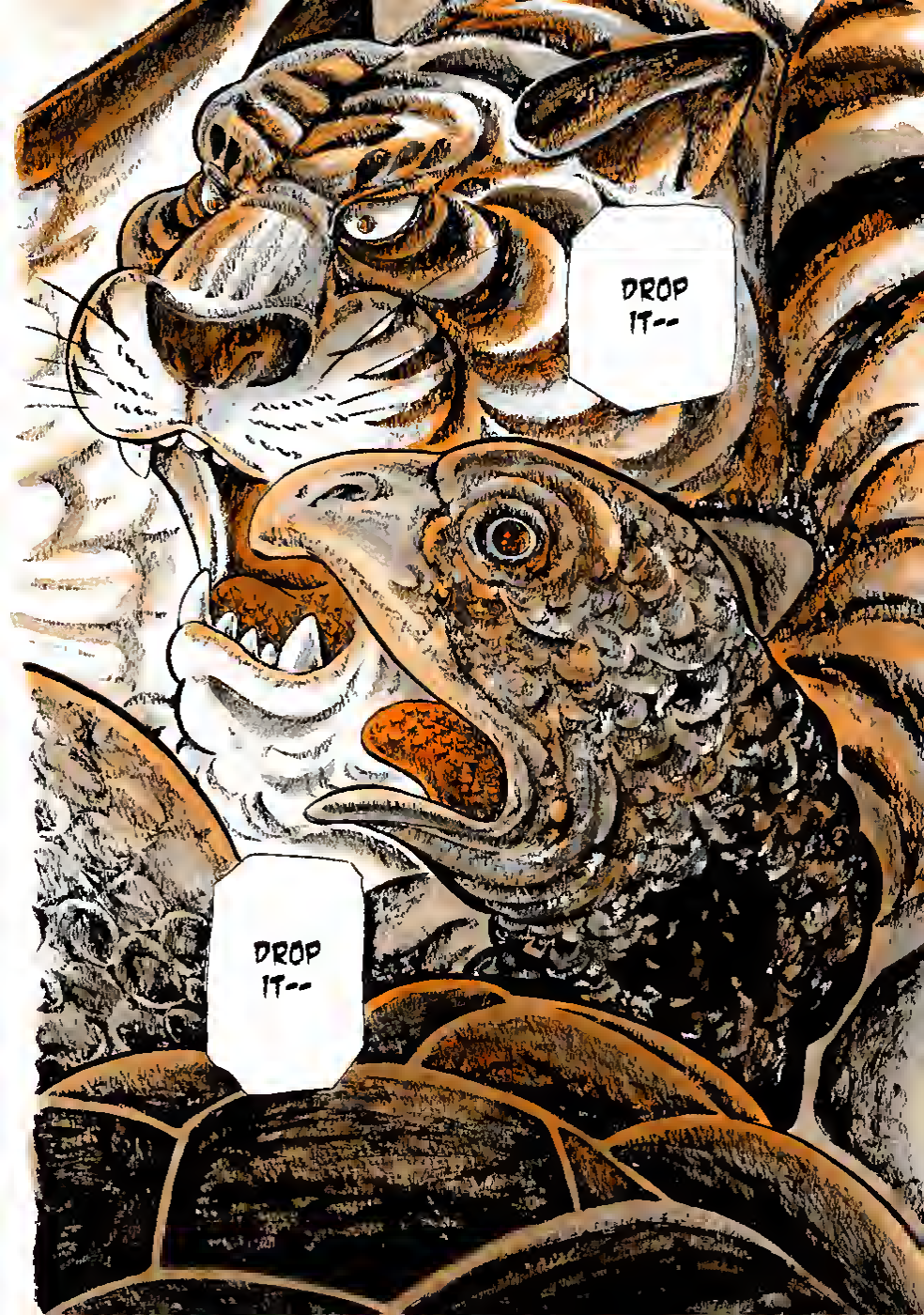
HE FORCIBLY INVITED HER TO THE GAME. HIS ULTERIOR MOTIVES, HOWEVER, WERE PLAIN AS DAY.
HIS CHAGRIN AT LOSING, COMBINED WITH HER BEAUTY, MADE HIS ANGER A HUNDREDFOLD GREATER.

HE LOST AGAINST A FEMALE PERFORMER WHO WAS CALLED TO ENTERTAIN.




TAKE SPECIAL CARE TO SCARE HER GOOD
LISTEN, TONIGHT ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE MONEY
GOT'CHA, MASTER.

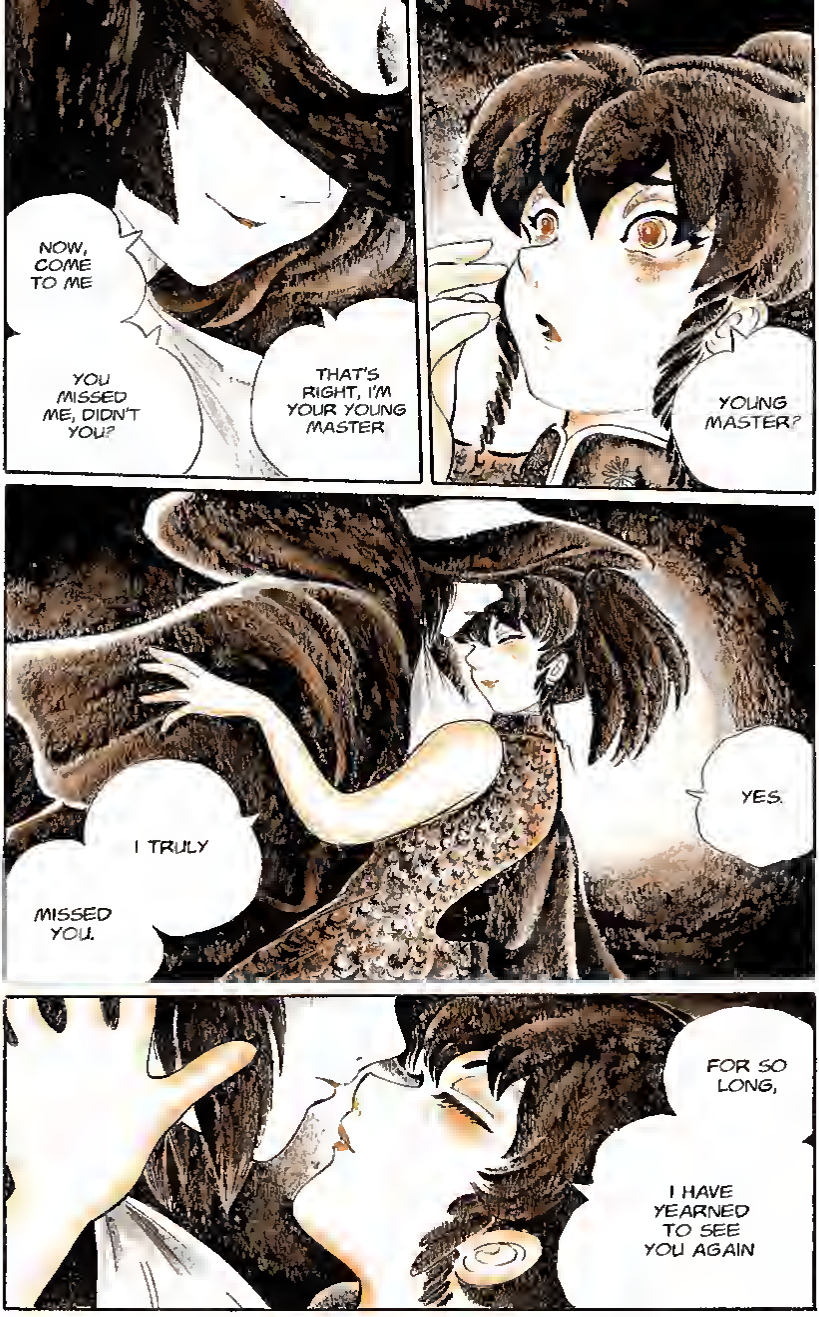
DROP IT.
I SAID DROP IT!!


DROP IT--
DROP IT--

DROP IT AND LEAVE!

NOT BAD, SISTER.
BUT I STILL HAVE SOME TRICKS LEFT.
YOUR GAMES ARE EXCELLENT, KID, BUT PLAYTIME'S OVER.
TAKE YOUR PETS AND GO HOME!

NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF WOMAN YOU ARE,
YOU'LL LET YOUR GUARD DOWN AGAINST THE MAN YOU LOVE
COME TO ME
COME TO ME, TENOME. IT'S BEEN SO LONG.


NOW, COME TO ME
YOU MISSED ME, DIDN'T YOU?
THAT'S RIGHT, I'M YOUR YOUNG MASTER
YOUNG MASTER?
YES.
I TRULY MISSED YOU.
FOR SO LONG,
I HAVE YEARNED TO SEE YOU AGAIN

HYEE!
HYEE!!
...AND THAT'S WHY I'LL SPARE YOUR LIFE.
DON'T YOU DARE TRY THAT AGAIN, YOU LITTLE DEVIL!
HYEE--!

WHEN I CAME TO, IT WAS ALREADY MORNING,
AND I FOUND MYSELF HANGING ON THE FLAGPOLE OF THE TALLEST TOWER IN TOWN.

WELL DONE
I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU, SISTER
SINCE IT'S COME TO THIS, I'LL HAVE TO BECOME YOUR UNWANTED APPRENTICE.

◎ END ◎

Postscript

Tenome is a spin-off character from another manga whose age was set to be around 13 or 14. However, she freely grew up as the story progressed, and by the last story in this volume, she has become a mature adult woman.

When drawing nudes for fanservice, I thought nudes of a young girl might be unsatisfactoy, but after I thought about it more, the publishing magazine was geared toward a female audience, and I just recentenly realized that kind of fanservice was unnecessary.

Takahashi Yousuke

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